Inequality in the public priority perceptions of elected representatives

Inequality in the Public Priority Perceptions of Elected Representatives

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ABSTRACT: Democratic representation presumes that politicians know what the public wants. Ideally, politicians have accurate perceptions not only of which policies citizens prefer (positions), but also of which issues citizens prefer to be dealt with in the first place (priorities). How accurate are elites' perceptions of the public's priorities? And, if elite estimations are off, is there inequality in these perceptions? Using data from two surveys—one measuring citizens' priorities and one gauging representatives' perceptions thereof—in Belgium, Canada and Israel, this paper shows that politicians' perceptions of the extent to which citizens want them to undertake action on various issues, are not entirely accurate. Importantly, politicians' perceptions appear to be biased towards the preferences of the male, highly educated and politically interested citizens. These key findings apply to all three countries under study. When it comes to gender specifically, it is found that female politicians' estimations are not less skewed towards male preferences than male politicians' estimations, which suggests the skew is not the consequence of bad descriptive representation but rather of certain segments of citizens being more politically active. All in all, the results show that inequality in representation might partly be driven by underlying perceptual inaccuracy.

Representatives' responsiveness to citizen preferences is one track via which democratic representation comes about—the other classic track being electoral replacement through a correctly voting electorate (Miller and Stokes 1963). More precisely, political representatives take their *perceptions of citizens' preferences* into account when taking position on policy issues (policy responsiveness) (Soroka and Wlezien 2010), and when deciding which issues to pay attention to in the first place (agenda responsiveness) (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Indeed, most of the vast body of work on representation—irrespective of whether it is looked at from a dyadic, partisan or collective perspective—is based on the idea that representatives somehow form themselves a more or less accurate perception of what voters want and care about, and then act accordingly (see Soroka et al. 2009, and for the general argument about politicians sensing public opinion: Stimson et al. 1995).

A key question is then to what extent their perceptions of public preferences are accurate. While scholarly interest in this topic is on the rise (e.g. Belchior 2014; Broockman and Skovron 2018; Esaiasson and Holmberg 2017), there are at least two lacunae. First, research dealing with the accuracy of public opinion perceptions is exclusively focused on the *positional* dimension of citizens' preferences. Almost no studies look into the accuracy of elite perceptions of people's *priorities*[1]. Nevertheless, democratic representation is not just a matter of positional but also of priority congruence: policy makers selectively pay attention to certain issues (a process that involves trade-offs) on which they then pursue policy change (Bevan and Jennings 2014). Putting issues people care about on the agenda is a crucial step in the representational process: it matters for responsive policies to be enacted (e.g. Alexandrova et al. 2016; Jones and Baumgartner 2004) and, additionally, for citizens to *feel* represented (Reher 2015). After all, how well would a representative democracy work if

politicians' behavior matched the positional preferences of the public on a non-salient issue and at the same time completely ignored high priority issues (Jones and Baumgartner 2004)?

Second, we do not know whether politicians' perceptions of public priorities are skewed towards the preferences of certain social groups—thus generating *unequal* representation. There are growing concerns about how the preferences of certain groups are represented worse than the preferences of other, more advantaged societal groups (see e.g. Bartels 2008 and Rosset 2016 on income inequality, Reher 2018 on gender inequality, and Schakel and Van der Pas 2021 on educational inequality). One possible explanation of these representational inequalities is that politicians' *perceptions* of what citizens want are biased towards the preferences of advantaged groups (Peters 2018; Rosset 2016). Exploring this idea for the very first time, Pereira (2020) recently showed that Swedish politicians' perceptions of their party electorate's opinion are indeed biased in favor of the opinions of the affluent. Studying a similar perceptual skew in politicians' *priority* perceptions seems a promising endeavor, as empirical evidence is at this point entirely lacking.

The present study tackles these two lacunae in the representation literature. In doing so, it speaks to both research on perceptual accuracy (first contribution: examining *priority* perceptions) and research on inequality in representation (second contribution: examining *inequality* in priority perceptions). Specifically, the paper examines how different groups of citizens prioritize specific issues and compares it with the perceptions thereof held by elected representatives. Note that we do *not* focus on income inequality here (we unfortunately do not have data about income at our disposal), but on three other, relevant characteristics that cause representational inequality: gender, education, and political interest.

Empirically, we draw on two parallel surveys—one with citizens on their actual political priorities, and one with elites on their perceptions of these priorities. We implement this

design in three countries: Belgium, Canada, and Israel. These countries have strongly diverging political systems, with different institutional arrangements that could affect the accuracy of politicians' perceptions of public priorities. Because our three-country design does not offer enough analytical leverage to disentangle institutional effects, the country variation serves as a robustness test of our findings.

We find that representatives' perceptions of the relative popular importance of different issues are not far off, but not entirely accurate either. Most important from a normative perspective is the finding that the priorities of some population groups are closer to politicians' perception of what the public as a whole cares about. Concretely, the priorities of male, highly educated and politically interested citizens get a larger weight when politicians form themselves an image of public priorities. These novel findings, that are robust across the three countries under study, imply that the widely demonstrated inequality in actual representation could partly be the consequence of preceding perceptual biases.

PUBLIC PRIORITY PERCEPTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES

How accurate are politicians' perceptions of what the public wants? Up until now, scholars interested in the perceptual track predominantly studied politicians' perceptions the public's *positions*. Millar and Stokes (1963), drawing on a survey with U.S. Members of Congress, were the first to collect data on politicians' perceptions of their district's opinion. In the slipstream of their pioneering study, a small and by now older body of work tackled elites' perceptions of voters' positional preferences (see e.g. Hedlund and Friesema 1972; Clausen 1977; Uslaner and Weber 1979). Recently, the perceptual path of democratic linkage has been rediscovered in studies by Belchior (2014) in Portugal and by Broockman and Skovron (2018) in the U.S. The

tentative conclusion of these empirical studies is that elites' perceptions of the public's positional preferences are not very accurate.

Politicians in a representative democracy are not only expected to develop policies in line with people's positional preferences, however; they should also make sure to address the issues that people care about. In other words, representation is not just a matter of positions but also of *priorities* (this argument goes back to the classic contribution by Bachrach and Baratz 1962 and has been developed compellingly by Baumgartner and Jones 1993 and Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Imagine a polity that is perfectly in line with the positional preferences of citizens, but that deals with issues that citizens do not care about, while the issues that citizens want to see tackled are ignored. We would consider the polity, despite its positional congruence, as not being adequately responsive to the people's wishes. So, policy making is not only a matter of turning people's positional preferences into actual policy decisions, it is also about making sure policy makers devote attention to the policies citizens care about (Reher 2015; Bevan and Jennings 2014). It is in the interaction between positional and priority preferences that genuine representation comes about.

Such 'priority congruence' or 'agenda responsiveness' is far from self-evident. It is not the case that government's policy priorities naturally match citizens' priorities. After all, work on agenda-setting has shown that policy priorities are heavily constrained by attention scarcity (this work was originally triggered by Stokes 1963; followed by e.g. Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jennings and John 2009; Lindeboom 2012; Bevan and Jennings 2014). This makes it interesting to look at the accuracy of politicians' priority perceptions—a topic about which we know close to nothing (the one exception we know of being the study by Converse and Pierce 1986). Therefore, a first goal of this study is to examine the extent to which politicians have a *correct perception* of the public's *priorities*.

If politicians' priority perceptions are inaccurate, the crucial question is *how* they differ from reality. One possibility is that politicians' perceptions are skewed towards certain social groups. The broad field of representation witnesses a growing interest in inequality—the fact that stronger groups (such as the rich or the higher-educated) tend to be better represented than others (e.g. Bartels 2008; Gilens 2012; Hakverdian 2015; Soroka and Wlezien 2008). Most of these studies suggest that there is a bias in what representatives *do*. One possibility is that this bias stems from how representatives *perceive* the preferences of the public. When politicians think about what the overall public wants them to take action upon, do certain groups' preferences carry more weight in their considerations than those of other groups?

Various mechanisms—that we cannot empirically disentangle in this study, but that are nevertheless interesting to discuss as the drivers behind our hypotheses—can explain how such a bias could come about. A first mechanism is inequality in political *participation*. Certain societal groups are less likely to participate politically, be it in elections, through protests or through direct contact with politicians (e.g. Rosset 2016; Peters 2018). The more active participation of some groups could lead politicians to misperceive public preferences in the direction of those active groups because of two main reasons. First, the more active engagement of some groups potentially skews politicians' 'information environment'. In their foundational study, Miller and Stokes (1963, 54–55) already contended that elites' perceptions of public preferences may be wrong because they are mainly confronted with the 'engaged segments' of the public. More recently, Miler (2007) has indeed shown that when U.S. Congressmen think of their district they primarily consider those who donate money to their campaigns and actively contact them (see also Hertel-Fernandez et al. 2019). Similarly,

Broockman and Skovron (2018) hold that U.S. politicians nowadays overestimate their constituents' conservatism because conservative citizens are more active in contacting their representatives. Underlying these specific U.S. findings, there is a general logic of engaged segments of the public being more active in conveying their preferences to politicians, hence skewing politicians' perceptions of the public in general. Second, the fact that some groups of citizens participate less in elections (or make a less informed vote choice) might also lower politicians' motivation to learn about their preferences. Being strategic actors who mainly care about electoral defeat, politicians are probably more motivated to invest resources on informing themselves about engaged groups' preferences (e.g. Griffin and Newman 2005) which might, again, skew politicians' perceptions of the public in favor of the priorities of politically active citizens.

A second mechanism is (the lack of) descriptive representation (Rosset 2016). The idea is that proper descriptive representation (parliament being a reflection of society) ensures substantive representation because estimating certain groups' preferences is easier for legislators who share certain experiences with these groups. The assessment is easier both because 'descriptive representatives' can rely on introspection to figure out what is deemed important (see Mansbridge 1999) and because the shared background facilitates communication between legislators and 'their' group (e.g. Broockman 2014). Importantly, we know that there is no good descriptive representation: politicians are predominantly male, higher-educated and affluent. If these politicians, just like anyone else, have the tendency to see the world through their own eyes, this might trigger a bias in favor of the societal groups politicians typically belong to (e.g. Peters 2018).

We now apply these general mechanisms to the three variables we will actually focus on in this study; gender, education, and political interest. First, there is a large literature on

female (under)representation (e.g. Celis et al. 2008) showing that policy-making is often skewed towards the preferences of men. Indeed, research shows that female and male citizens sometimes hold different policy positions and priorities (e.g. Schlozman et al. 1995; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Gidengil et al. 2003), and that when they do, men are usually represented better (Reher 2018). We will test whether these representational inequalities could be caused by biased priority perceptions. In line with the mechanisms discussed above, misperceptions could be explained by: (1) the lower political activity of women compared to men, although the difference between the sexes is withering (e.g. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Schlozman et al. 1995); and (2) the lower descriptive representation of women, as politicians still are mostly male (see Paxton et al. 2007). This is also the case in the three countries we study here; among our respondents, in Belgium there are 62% men, in Canada 70%, and in Israel 73%. We formulate our hypothesis as follows: *Compared to the political priorities of women, the political priorities of men are more in line with what representatives consider to be the general population's priorities (H1).*

Second, we zoom in on the priorities of citizens with different levels of education, which is nowadays becoming an important societal cleavage (see Kriesi et al. 2006). Citizens with different educational backgrounds have been shown to differ in their preferences, and government policy tends to cater more to the preferences of the higher educated (Soroka and Wlezien 2008; Hakhverdian 2015; Aaldering 2017; Schakel and Van Der Pas 2021). This unequal representation may, again, stem from the fact that highly educated groups are more politically active, voice their preferences more and hold politicians more accountable for (not) catering to their preferences at elections (e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Schlozman et al. 1999). Moreover, politicians themselves are predominantly highly educated (Bovens and Wille 2017), also in all countries we look at here; among our respondents, in Belgium and Israel, 96% has a

degree beyond high school, in Canada this is the case for 67%. We hypothesize: *Compared to the political priorities of the lower-educated, the political priorities of the higher-educated are more in line with what representatives consider to be the general population's priorities (H2).*

A third possible bias in politicians' estimation of public priorities might have to do with the priorities of those citizens with a high level of interest in politics. Political interest is a key predictor of political participation, and we know citizens with low political interest are less active in making their priorities heard (Verba et al. 1995). This complicates reading the opinions of the less interested and makes politicians care less about learning their priorities, because the chance that these uninterested groups will hold them accountable is smaller (Griffin and Newman 2005). With regard to the descriptive representation argument, one could argue that politicians, being surrounded by politically interested citizens and obviously being highly interested themselves, might project their perceptions of this specific group onto the population. This is why we expect that: *Compared to the political priorities of citizens with low levels of political interest, the political priorities of the politically interested are more in line with what representatives consider to be the general population's priorities (H3).*

DATA AND METHODS

Country sample — We ran our study in three countries: Belgium, Canada and Israel. These countries have diverging political systems and there are different institutional arrangements in place to combat inaccuracy and inequality of politicians' perceptions of public priorities. Canada has a first-past-the-post electoral system in which each constituency is represented by one MP only. Israel forms the ideal-typical opposite case: it has only one, national electoral circumscription and all 120 Members of the Knesset are elected in the entire country. Belgium

is the middle case: it has a proportional multimember district system. These system differences could affect perceptual accuracy in different ways. On the one hand, it seems plausible that politicians in Israel are better at estimating the general public's priorities (as we ask them to do) because it is the only country where 'the general public' constitutes their actual electorate. On the other hand, such a system does not necessarily offer politicians the biggest incentives to have close contacts with constituents. The Canadian system, with one MP per district, probably fosters such contacts more, which may improve perceptual accuracy. Belgium, then, has a different advantage: the system of compulsory voting yields very high levels of electoral turnout (Franklin 1999). High turnout implies that also the lower educated and less politically interested show up at the ballots, which should mitigate representatives' tendency to ignore these groups' priorities, hence improving the accuracy of their estimations. Additionally, only Belgium has a system of gender quota for electoral lists producing a comparatively strong female presence in Parliament—although the result (38% women) is not that different from Canada, for example (30% women)—which could foster a more correct perception of female priorities (Schwindt-Bayer 2009). Perceptual accuracy being dependent on all these different institutional characteristics simultaneously (*and* on the country-specific selection of issues; see below), we do not have clear expectations regarding country differences. The diversity of our country sample simply serves as a test of the robustness and generalizability of our findings across different political systems.

Elected representatives survey — Surveys with representatives were conducted between March and August 2015. In Belgium, we surveyed 269 politicians (members of parliament, ministers and party leaders; 73% response rate) of which 113 are national politicians and 156 are active in the regional parliaments. In Canada, 76 politicians were surveyed—45 national politicians and 31 politicians of the Ontario provincial level (27%

response rate). In Israel, 62 (ex-)members of the national parliament participated (37% response rate)[2]. Although response rates vary substantially across countries, with a total of 407 successful elite surveys and a global response rate of 46%, our dataset is exceptional (as a comparison see e.g. Deschouwer and Depauw 2014). Tests showed that the response bias in our politician sample is small (AUTHORS 2017).

Instead of asking politicians about citizens' prioritization of general policy domains as is common practice in public opinion research (e.g. Wlezien 2005), this study uses *specific* issues. More precisely, we draw on actual news stories—events or problems attracting media attention—and ask politicians about their perception of the general public's desire for political action on the subject of these news stories. The key advantage of using real and specific stories is that politicians and citizens are thinking about the same thing when answering our priority questions (this is unsure when asking about broad domains like 'the economy'). Moreover, we know that news media are an important source of information for politicians and citizens alike, and that politicians react to media coverage by, for example, asking parliamentary questions or taking a public stance (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2016). This makes our survey task— expressing an opinion about the need to act upon a news story (citizens) or assessing its public's preference (politicians)—a realistic one.

The survey was filled out by politicians during a face-to-face interview. It presented politicians with seven different, domestic news stories that had been prominent in the news in their country/region (*De Standaard* and *Le Soir* in Belgium, *the Global Mail, Toronto Star* and *La Presse* in Canada, and *Ha'aretz* in Israel) in the five weeks preceding the interview. Every day, the main front page article (excluding sports/celebrity/entertainment) was selected. All in all, the selected stories have a good spread over various policy domains. Just a short summarizing tagline was shown to participants. Examples are: *Truth and Reconciliation*

Commission on residential schools releases report which includes 94 recommendations including the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Canada, *Toronto Star*)*; Energy monopolists toughen stance against government and refuse to reduce prices* (Israel, *Ha'aretz*); *The number of sick leave days for teachers has reached its highest level since 2009, with burn-out and stress as the most important causes* (Belgium, *De Standaard*). Since the interviews took place over a period of several months, the design had a 'rolling' structure: for every interview a random sample of seven stories was drawn from the population of all stories published in the five weeks preceding the interview. **Appendix 1** provides the full list of stories coded throughout the entire interview period (N=471). Due to the irregular politician interview schedule, only 430 out of 470 stories were assessed by at least one politician. The fact that the stories vary across the countries is another reason not to engage in a systematic country comparison.

First, politicians got a filtering question whether they had seen, read or heard about the story. In 75 per cent of the cases, the answer was positive (reducing the N on the news story level to 380 different stories that were noticed by at least one politician). We excluded cases where politicians did not know about the story, because we fear politicians cannot make sensible priority assessments when they do not know well what a story is about. Politicians who said to have seen the story were asked the question tapping the dependent variable: *"To what degree do citizens want politicians to take action upon this topic)"?* Answers could range from 0 (no action wanted by citizens) to 10 (action wanted by citizens). The total number of usable ratings is 1,994, which is our final N[3]. By using a lot of different stories/issues we wanted to eliminate a potential idiosyncratic effect of specific stories. Because of this rolling survey approach, the number of politician ratings per story varies from 1 to 30, with an average of

5.2. Since we do not aggregate their estimations, this does not pose any problems for the analysis. Our multilevel models can deal with this unbalance.

Citizen survey — Simultaneously with the elite survey (rolling through the interview period), we implemented a random sample population survey in each country. Every week we asked a new sample of citizens about the exact same media stories we surveyed elites about. In total, 6,212 citizens were questioned about their policy priorities (Belgium: 2,189; Canada 2,903; Israel: 1,120)[4]. Sampling and surveying was done by *SSI* in Belgium and Canada and by *iPanel* in Israel. Our population samples are representative in terms of gender, age and education level. Citizens rated six stories each. Recall of the stories by citizens (48%) was much lower than recall by politicians (75%), which makes sense as politicians are known to be insatiable news consumers. For respondents who indicated having seen or heard about a news story, the question tapping their priority of the news stories reads as follows: *"To what extent do you want politicians to take action upon this topic?"* (0=no action wanted; 10=action wanted). For respondents who did not recall a news story, we slightly adapted this question: "*Based on the description of the news story, can you estimate to what extent you want politicians to take action upon this topic?*". The analyses below include both those who knew about the story and those who did not. Again, because of the rolling structure of the data collection—with news stories very early or late in the interview period being evaluated less— and the random nature of the sampling procedure, the number of citizen ratings varies quite strongly, from 4 to a maximum of 176 ratings per story. The average story got 83 ratings; only 11 out of 380 news stories were rated by less than 20 people (See Appendix 1 for the distribution of the number of respondents per story). It is a disadvantage of our approach that we have few ratings for some stories: it means that there is some uncertainty around our measurement of the real public priority. This is why, as a robustness test, we repeated the

analyses to include only the stories for which the 95% confidence interval around our estimate of the real, general public priority spans less than one point on the 0-10 scale. The results (reported in the Appendix) remain the same. The citizen survey additionally contained measures of gender, educational level and interest in politics, which we will use to test our hypotheses. Descriptive statistics can be found in **Table 1**.

Table 1 – Variable descriptions and descriptive statistics

Variable	Question	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Citizen's priority of a story	*To what extent do you want politicians to take action upon this topic?* (0=not at all; 10=very much)	31,831	5.72	2.85	0	10
Politician's perception of citizens' priority of a story	*To what extent do citizens want politicians to take action upon this topic?* (0=not at all; 10=very much)	1,994	6.04	2.66	0	10
Gender	*What is your gender?* (0=female; 1=male)	6,166	.50	.50	0	1
Education	*What is your highest level of education?* (original answers in five categories; recoded) (0 = no higher education; 1 = higher education)	6,154	3.93	.91	1	5
Political Interest	*To what degree are you interested in politics in general?* (original answers on a scale from 0 to 10; recoded) (0=low interest (<5); 1=high interest (>=5))	6,159	5.85	2.74	0	10

Analytical strategy — There are essentially two ways to measure (inequality in) politicians' perceptual accuracy. A first option is to look at the *absolute difference* (the error) between the extent to which citizens want action and politicians' estimation thereof. A second option is to approach the matter in a correlational way, by looking at the *relative* priority of a news story compared to other stories. We believe the latter approach makes most sense here (this is different when perceptions of public *positions* are studied—then the former approach is generally preferred, see e.g. Broockman & Skovron 2018). The reason is that the prioritization

of certain policies inherently boils down to making trade-offs: it is not about getting absolute levels right but about getting the order of priorities between issues right. Imagine that citizens do not care about politics in general, and say they deem political action on issue A unimportant (3 out of 10), and action on issue B moderately important (5 out of 10). In such a situation, a politician who overestimates the overall importance citizens attribute to action, but has the order right (e.g. thinks citizens' priority score for issue A is 7 and is 9 for issue B), has a more correct perception of which issue should be prioritized (i.e. issue B) than a politician who is closer in absolute terms (e.g. rating both issue A and B as 4) but who lacks insight into which issue should get priority.

Specifically, to examine how *accurate* politicians' priority perceptions are, we test how well the mean priorities of citizens (independent variable) predict politicians' estimations thereof (dependent variable). Multilevel, crossed-effects regression models are used: the random effects on the politician and story level control for the fact that one politician rated multiple stories and that most stories are rated by several politicians (observations not independent); these effects are crossed because the data are not hierarchical – each story could be rated by each politician (and vice versa).

For the second research question—which *groups' priorities get a larger weight* when politicians estimate the general populations' priorities—we essentially take the same approach, but we split up our citizen sample in different groups. This is the common approach in unequal representation studies (e.g. Gilens 2012). We pitch the priorities of specific groups against each other as separate independent variables (e.g. average priority of each story according to men vs. average priority of each story according to women) to check to what extent some groups' priorities form a better predictor of politicians' perceptions. For the main analyses of the paper, we do this for each characteristic (gender, education and interest)

separately, because we want citizen averages to be based on sufficient ratings. Looking at the intersection *between* gender, education and interest (which is interesting because they are correlated) must be done with caution because the number of citizens in each group (e.g. highly-educated, non-interested men) becomes really low. We present such an additional analysis in the Appendix, but explicitly want to refrain from drawing big conclusions from it.

RESULTS

General accuracy of elite perceptions — Having at the same time a measure of people's priorities of news stories and of politicians' *perception* of these priorities, we can assess the accuracy of politicians' estimations. The frequency distribution of both variables is presented in **Figure 1**. Politicians and citizens interpret the question in a similar way. Both groups use the full scale, a majority of both groups' scores is situated in the higher half of the scale, and the distributions are similar. Still, the peaks—reaching a high at values 5 (citizens) and 8 (politicians) respectively—suggest that politicians slightly overrate the priority citizens devote to the stories. In fact, citizens' average priority of a story is 5.72 on a 0-10 scale while politicians' perceptions reach an average at 6.04. This pattern holds in all three countries. We observe the biggest difference between citizens' actual priorities and politicians' average estimation in Israel (5.93 vs. 6.46), a slightly smaller difference in Canada (5.84 vs. 6.27), and the smallest mismatch in Belgium (5.50 vs. 5.87).

Figure 1 – Frequency distribution of citizens' real priority and politicians' perceptions thereof (N=31,831 citizen ratings; N=1,994 politician ratings)
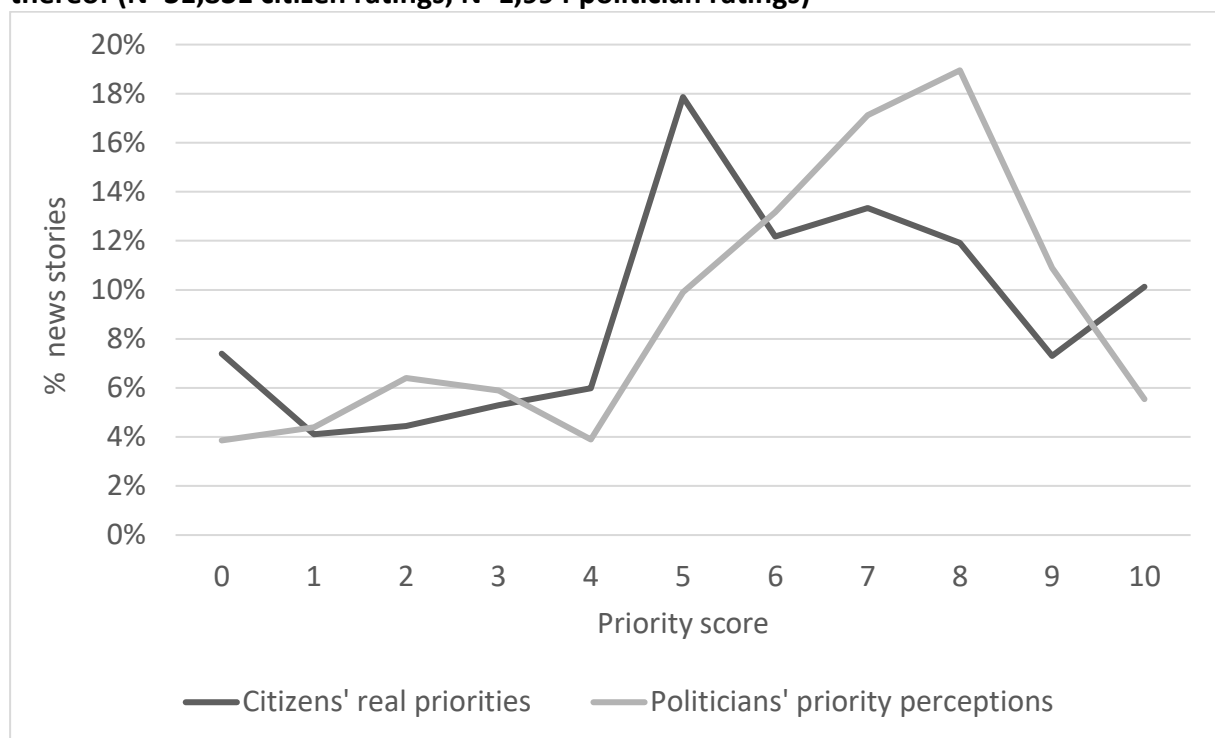
Politicians may on average overrate the public priority of a news story, but this does not mean that their estimations are completely off. There is a substantive and significant correlation between the average score a story gets from citizens and from politicians: the Pearson r is .51. Multilevel regression analyses (see **Appendix 2**) confirm the strong and significant effect of citizens' priorities on politicians' estimations (coeff.=1.02; SE=.08; p=.000). Citizens' average real priorities explain 53% of the total story level variance in elite estimations. The pattern is very similar across countries. However, lacking an objective benchmark to qualify these numbers—Is this correlation high? Are estimations rather inaccurate, or rather accurate?—we can only conclude that politicians' perceptions seem to be based on some real information (or a well-developed gut feeling) but are not entirely correct.

Differences across gender — Examining gender inequalities only makes sense if men and women *differ* with regard to their priorities. Our data show that gender differences are not huge, but they exist. Across all stories, the correlation between men's and women's average priority is .75. Still, on many stories men and women hold quite different priorities. The difference is significant for 15% (57 out of 379[5]) of the stories[6] (α=.10). For example, one story that is considered a much larger priority for women than for men (difference +2.35) is a Belgian story about the proposal to reduce the age of consent from 16 to 14 years old. The story with the largest difference and with men giving more priority to it (difference of -1.80) is a Belgian story about the fact that many cases of money laundering do not lead to judicial steps due to the limited means of the justice department. Importantly, that men and women differ in their prioritization does not imply that one of them gives an on average higher priority than the other. In fact, the average priority score for women (5.73) and men (5.71) is almost identical. Women and men just prioritize *other* stories.

Whom do politicians follow, then, when they asses the general public's priorities? The answer is straightforward: they follow men (all analyses with regard to gender differences can be found in **Appendix 3**). When we include the priorities of women and men in one model, the effect of the male priorities on elites' perceptions is significant while that of women's priorities is not. **Figure 2** plots the predicted values of politicians' estimations, calculated for men's and women's priorities separately, for the three countries separately (based on Appendix Table 3.1). As one can see, the slope of the lines differs quite dramatically: politicians' estimations are more sensitive to changes in male priorities and changes in female priorities do not add anything to that. The main effect of gender on elites' perceptions is robust in all three countries. In fact, the gender effect is remarkably similar in size— notwithstanding the very different political and institutional make-up of these three countries.

Because the priorities of men and women are overall highly correlated, we repeat this analysis including only the subset of news stories that are rated significantly differently by men and women, and this leads to very similar results (Appendix Table 3.3). When their priorities differ, it is men's priorities which get the upper hand in politicians' estimations. These findings do not imply that the priorities of women exert no effect at all on politicians' general priority perceptions: including the priorities of men and women in *separate* models shows that women's priorities do exert a significant effect on politicians' perceptions, but the coefficient size is substantially and significantly smaller than that of men's priorities (Appendix Table 3.2). Hypothesis 1 gets confirmation from the evidence: elites tend to project men's priorities on the population as a whole at the expense of women's priorities.

That elite perceptions are biased in favor of men may—by those who believe the presence of women in parliament enhances their substantive representation—be attributed to the female underrepresentation in the assemblies we are looking at. Our evidence does not support that argument. Interacting the gender of the politician with the gender of the citizen shows that the insignificant effect of the female priorities applies equally to male and female representatives (Appendix Table 3.4). Instead of women being better able to grasp the priorities of fellow women, we find here that women make the *same* errors as men do and weight male priorities higher in their estimation of public priorities. This suggests that unequal participation (not just electoral participation, remember that voting is compulsory in Belgium) rather than unequal descriptive representation may explain the perceptual bias in favor of male priorities. It seems as if the 'opinion climate' affecting both female and male elites is dominated by male priorities, suggesting that female citizens have a hard(er) time voicing their preferences.

Figure 2 – Predicted values of elites' priority estimations for different values of men's/women's average priorities
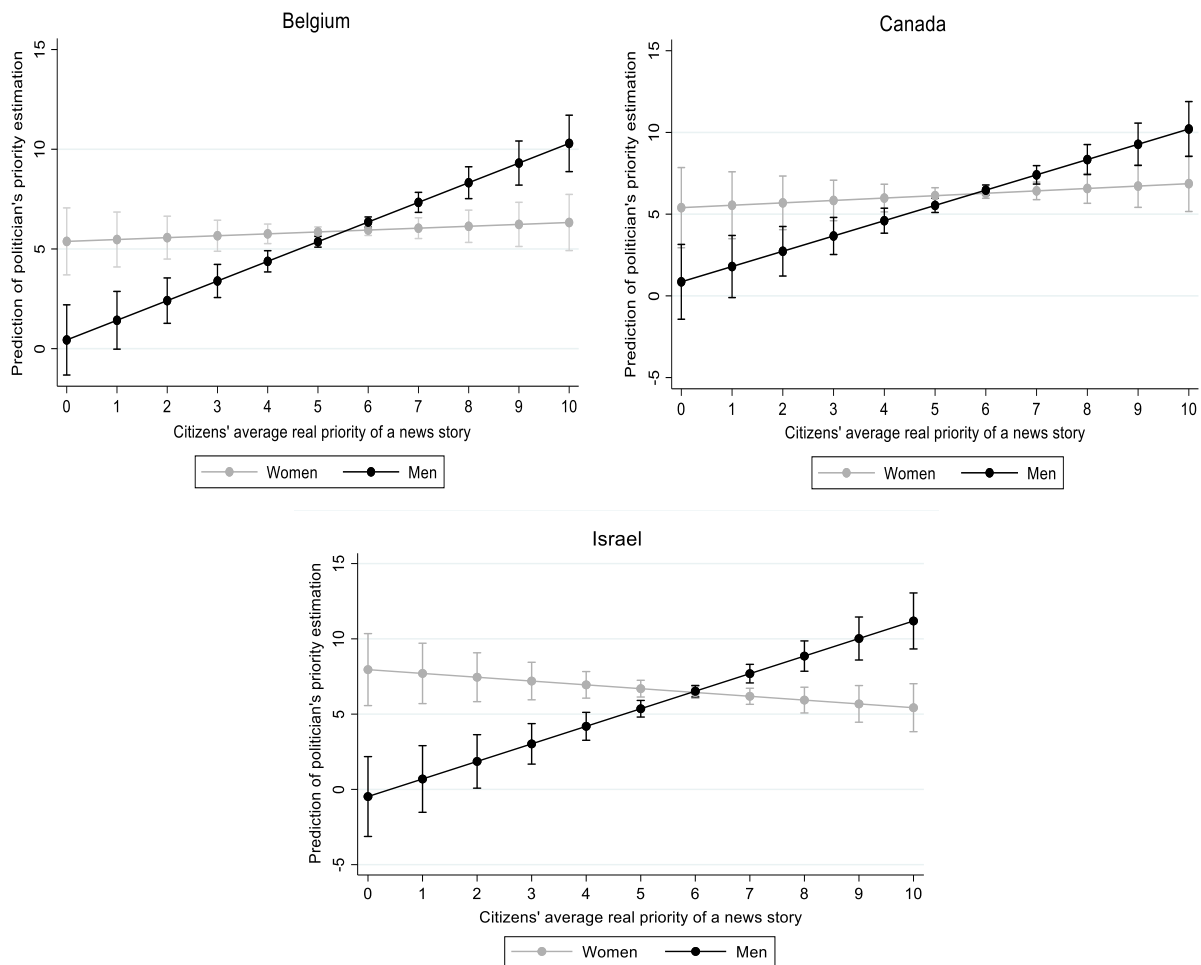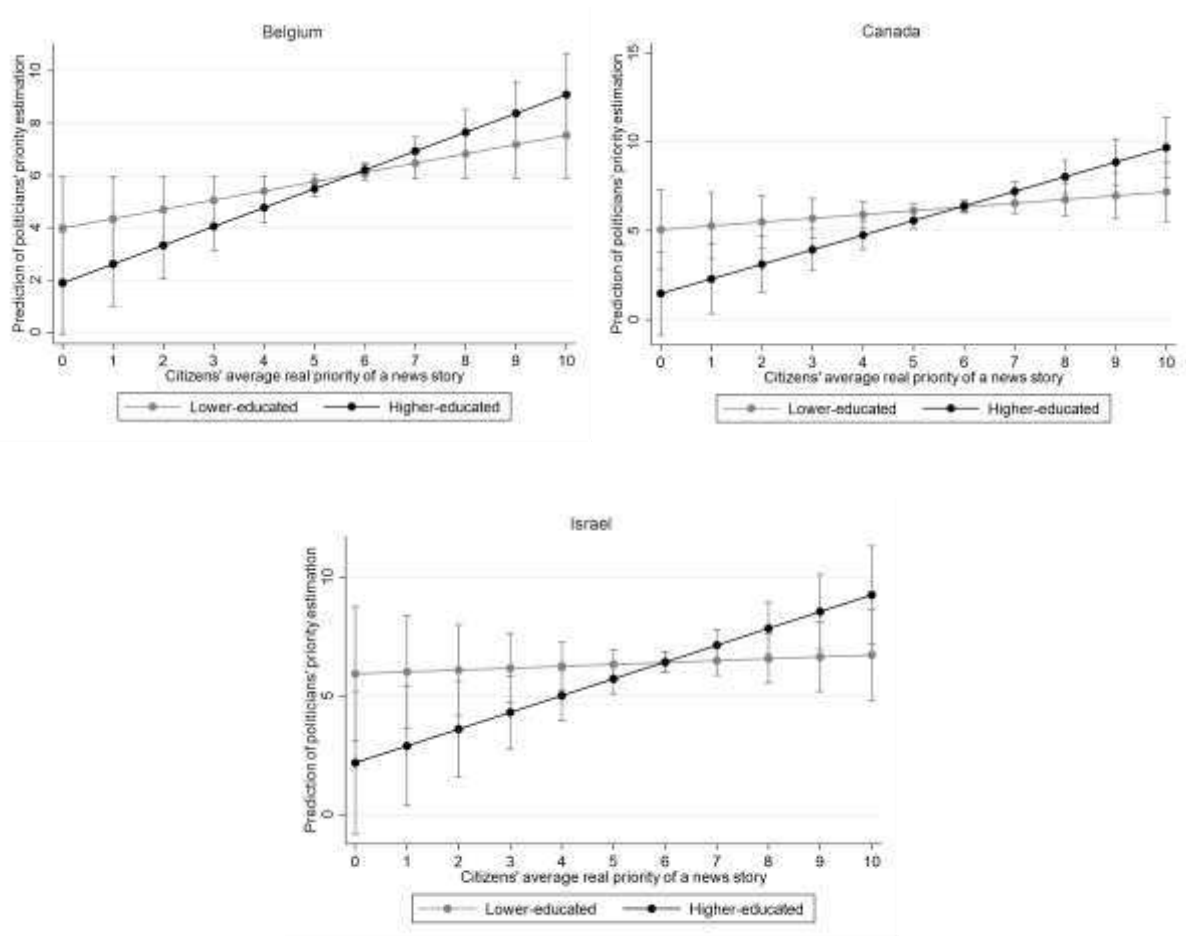

Differences across levels of education — Do different education groups prioritize different issues? We compare lower-educated citizens (i.e. those who received no education, only primary school or only secondary school) with higher-educated citizens (i.e. those who followed higher education at a non-university or university level). Comparing the groups descriptively first, we see that the priorities of lower-educated people are strongly correlated with those of the higher-educated (Pearson r=.75). Still, for 11% (43 out of 380) of the stories the priorities of both groups are significantly different (α=.10). The story the lower-educated especially cared about is a Canadian story about a celebrity who suspended his career after being arrested for sexual misbehavior (difference of +4.33). An example of a story that was

much more prioritized among the highly educated (difference of -2.03) was a Belgian story about citizens escaping taxes by opening foreign bank accounts. Overall, it is not the case that there are big differences in the average priority scoring across education levels. Lower-educated people give a mean priority score of 5.66 while the higher-educated have a mean score of 5.74. So, as with gender differences, people with different degrees foremost consider *different* stories a priority for political action.

Do these differences in priorities across education groups translate in elites' public priority perceptions? The full results are in **Appendix 4**. First, like we did for gender, we pitch the priorities of lower- and higher-educated against each other as predictors of politicians' estimations (Appendix Table 4.1). Predicted values from the separate country models are in Figure 3. We see that in Canada and Israel, the effect of the priorities of the lower-educated is small and non-significant while the higher-educated have a strong and significant effect. As a result, the slope of the line for the lower-educated in Figure 3 is less steep than that of the higher-educated, which suggests that elites' perceptions are less sensitive to changes in priorities of the former. In Belgium, the pattern is similar but less outspoken and the preferences of the lower-educated nearly exert a significant effect too (b=.35; S.E.=.18; p=.051). When we include lower- and higher-educated citizens' priorities in *separate* models (Appendix Table 4.2), we see that the coefficient of the higher-educated is larger, but the difference between the two coefficients, across countries, is rather small and not significant. So, at first sight, the evidence for inequality is weaker here. Patterns go in the expected direction but are not very strong. Effects become stronger, though, when we repeat the analysis including only the subset of stories that are rated significantly differently by higher- and lower-educated citizens (Appendix Table 4.3). Lower- and higher-educated citizens often do not have different priorities but when they do, the higher-educated weight more on

politicians' estimations. Taking all findings together, we cautiously confirm Hypothesis 2, although we want to avoid drawing big conclusions here: there seems to less educational inequality than gender (see above) or political interest (see below) inequality, especially in Belgium.

Figure 3 – Predicted values of elites' priority estimations for different values of lower/higher educated citizens' average priorities

Differences across levels of political interest — Do politically interested and uninterested people prioritize different stories? Again we distinguish between two groups: citizens with lower political interest (below 5 on a scale from 0 to 10), and higher political interest (5 or higher). Differences in priorities appear to be bigger than gender and education differences. For 46% (174 out of 379[7]) of the stories are the priorities of those with a high and low political interest significantly different (α=.10). A story with a big difference in priority is, again, the

story about how Belgian citizens escaped paying taxes (difference of -6.8). The opposite example is a story from Israel about an argument between Iran and the West about Iran's nuclear program that was rated with a higher priority by the people with low political interest (difference +3.25). Furthermore, the scores given by people with a high political interest are systematically higher (5.99) than those given by people with low interest (on average 4.99). People with different levels of political interest both prioritize *other* stories and they differ in their *general* prioritization of stories.

Which groups' cues do politicians follow when assessing the public's priorities? The evidence—shown in **Appendix 5**—strongly points to the preferences of the highly politically interested as most strongly associated with politicians' estimations. In each of the three countries, the effect of the high interest group's priorities is positive and significant, whereas there is no effect at all of the low interest group's priorities (Appendix Table 5.1). **Figure 4** shows the predicted values of the interest variables for each country. The slope of the lines depicting the priorities of the highly interested are steepest, indicating that politicians' priority estimations are more responsive to the priorities of this group of politically interested citizens. Again, we should emphasize that additional analyses including each groups' priorities in *separate* models show that the priorities of the lower interested *do* exert a significant effect on politician estimations too, but just to a lesser extent than those of the other two groups. The coefficient of the low interest group is significantly smaller than that of the high interest group (Appendix Table 5.2). Repeating the analysis including only the subset of stories that are rated significantly differently by lower and highly interested citizens, we find the exact same pattern: when their preferences differ, it are the priorities of highly interested citizens that get a larger weight in politicians' overall assessment of the public's priorities (Appendix

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Table 5.3). Hypothesis 3 is supported by the evidence: politicians tend to project the priorities of citizens with high political interest on the population as a whole.

Figure 4 - Predicted values of elites' priority estimations for different values of differently interested citizens' average priorities
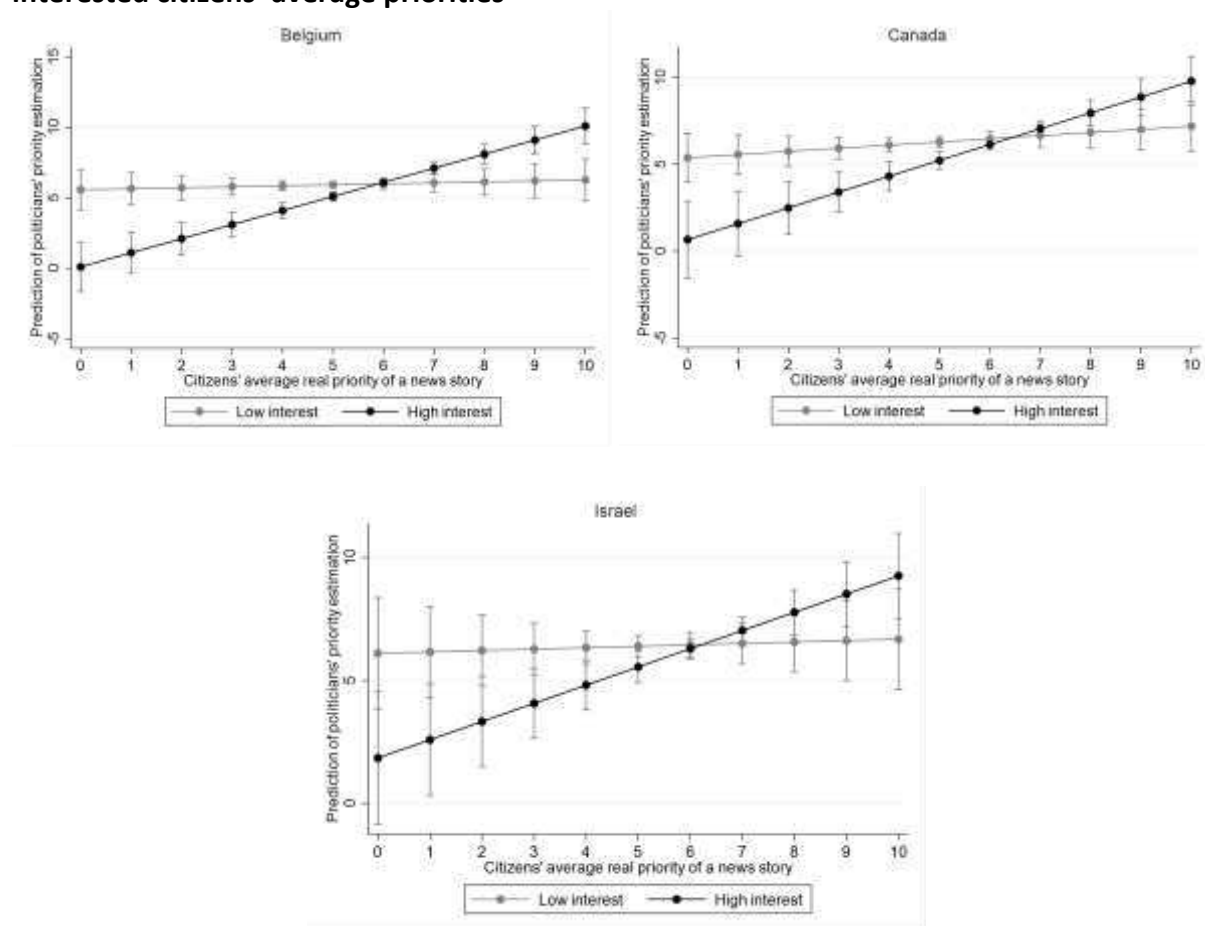
Finally, we try to look at gender, education and political interest simultaneously. After all, these features are often correlated and we wonder to what extent each of the features individually plays a role. However, as we already explained in the methods section, we actually do not have enough data for this kind of analysis, because the groups (e.g. higher-educated women with low political interest) per story are really small. This is why we urge to interpret the analysis, in **Appendix 6**, with care. Still, the results make a lot of sense and confirm that all

three characteristics studied here contribute to explaining politicians' estimations of citizen priorities. Comparing two groups at a time (which always share two out of the three features, but differ on one), we see that gender, education *and* political interest seem to matter.

CONCLUSION

Politicians' perceptions of public opinion form one of the most important ways in which democratic representation can come about: extant work shows that representatives' perceptions are consequential and exert influence on the political actions they undertake (see for instance Miller and Stokes 1963 and, more recently, Mansbridge 2003 on anticipatory representation and Butler and Nickerson 2011). This study contributed to research on the accuracy of these perceptions, by examining representatives' perceptions of the general public's *priorities* in three very different countries (Canada, Belgium and Israel) and by zooming in on the *inequalities* present in these perceptions.

We find that politicians' perceptions, in all three countries, seem to be affected substantially by citizens' real priorities. At the same time, there is a certain mismatch between politicians' perceptions and citizens' actual priorities, and this mismatch is not random. Politicians' perceptions are biased against the priorities of women, the lower educated and the less politically interested. These perceptual biases apply to politicians in three very different political systems and hence seem to be hard-wired into the behavior of representatives—irrespective of the system they are functioning in. Importantly, that we find politicians' perceptions of public priorities to be biased in favor of the priorities of more advantaged societal groups, may in part explain why their priorities tend to be better reflected in actual policymaking (see for instance Gilens 2012 or Hakverdian 2015).

Speculating on the causes of these biased perceptions, we argued that *unequal participation* and a *lack of descriptive representation* could be the drivers of inequality in priority perceptions. Countering the latter mechanism, however, we did not find female representatives to be more sensitized to female preferences than their male counterparts. In addition, we show that politicians' general priority perceptions are closer to the actual priorities of politically interested citizens—which are the more politically active people. These findings suggest that the biases are less a matter of who the representatives *are* but more a matter of the context in which they are operating and, most likely, the participation levels of different groups (confirming findings from Broockman and Skovron 2018). We cannot simply interpret political participation as the mere act of voting, though. After all, even in Belgium where voting is compulsory, we find that politicians tend to disregard the priorities of lower educated and less interested citizens. This suggests that other types of participation matter more: whether citizens contact politicians personally, whether they organize themselves into actively lobbying interest groups, whether they take to the streets to protest,… The main driver of politicians' biased perceptions of public priorities seems to be their skewed information environment.

Our study has a number of limitations. We lacked data on the income level of the citizens in our sample, while income is one of the best-known 'unequalizers' and the bulk of predominantly American literature on unequal representation has focused on income inequalities. Still, we believe our focus on gender and education makes sense as these features are widely studied in the literature and deemed relevant by scholars of unequal representation. We added political interest because this comes close to measuring the actual mechanism (i.e. unequal participation) that brings about the unequal perceptions. Unfortunately, we did not have a direct measure of political participation in our data which

prevented us from digging deeper into the mechanisms that link socio-demographic background variables such as gender and education with politicians' perceptions. The goal of the study was, first of all, to examine whether there *is* inequality in elites' perceptions and we presented clear-cut evidence in that regard. It will be up to other studies to dig deeper into the precise drivers of inequality.

A second limitation comes with the way in which we measured perceptual accuracy. We looked at *specific news stories*. While this guarantees that politicians and citizens are thinking of the exact same thing when evaluating priorities, the disadvantage is that all news stories are relatively salient (otherwise they would not end up in the newspaper) and, as a consequence, our sample lacks the least salient political issues. At the same time, not every news story lends itself to political action equally well. It is hard to assess the implications of this for our results, as mass media might enhance but also distort politicians' estimations of what the public wants. Future research might want to select issues differently to complement our findings.

Third, future research should further look into inequality in politicians' perceptions with regard to popular *positions* (as opposed to priorities). We believe unequal priority perceptions are important and consequential, but they do not yet explain the positional bias in representation.

A final thing to consider are the normative implications of our findings. For instance, is it necessarily a bad thing that politicians prioritize the priorities of the politically interested and the higher educated? One could argue that politicians *should* take their cues from these groups, precisely because their preferences are better informed and more consistent (see for example Rosset 2016). Yet, whereas it may be the case that the political solutions (positions) for concerns voiced by some groups are better or more valuable than the solutions adhered

to by other groups this is much less the case for the *priority* these concerns should have. It is hard to defend that politicians should devote less attention to issues prioritized by the lower educated, for instance. The populist revolution that we are witnessing at present in many democracies might be just that: a reaction to the fact that some groups' concerns are not adequately adopted into policy, because politicians undervalue them when making up their mind about the priorities of the population as a whole.

NOTES

[1] In line with an agenda-setting perspective, we use the word 'priority' to refer to the perceived importance of political action being taken on an issue. This means that an issue is deemed salient and that it must be dealt with prior to other issues (see: Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014).

[2] In the Israeli case, 18 of the 62 Members of the Knesset (MK) actually were ex-MKs. They were interviewed right after the Israeli national elections on the 17th of March 2015, so their non-reelection was very recent and, we suppose, did not affect their answers. The other 44 Israeli interviews were with actual MKs, some of them were brand new to the job. The reported response rate is calculated for the actual MKs only.

[3] 407 politicians were asked to rate 7 news stories. Due to stories that were unnoticed (25%) and additional missings on some of the key questions, the final N is 1,994.

[4] Due to missings on key variables such as educational level or political interest, the final number of citizens used to calculate their average real priority is generally a little bit lower.

[5] One story was exceptionally rated by only 4 women and is therefore left out of these analyses.

[6] Significance levels were determined via linear regressions predicting citizens' priority rating (DV) by gender (IV). Similar tests are conducted for education and political interest below.

[7] One story was not rated by citizens from all levels of interest and is therefore excluded from these analyses.

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Inequality in the Public Priority Perceptions of Elected Representatives

ONLINE APPENDIX

BELGIUM
1 The idea to deny Syrian fighters the Belgian nationality may face legal problems.
2 Trade unions and employers have reached an agreement on an increase in wages and social benefits, but ABVV (*the socialist union*) does not agree.
3 The number of sick leave days for teachers has reached its highest level since 2009, with burn-out and stress as the most important causes.
4 Tax authorities still organize fiscal amnesty, since many taxpayers want to rectify their negligence.
5 Swiss banks are trying to clear their client bases of savers with 'dirty money'. Clients who cannot prove they have paid taxes are forced to leave.
6 Companies still think that the government should not impose quotas for women on their boards, but they are nevertheless happy with the results of the quotas.
7 The waiting time for social housing differs greatly from municipality to municipality, with a minimum of 11 days (in Bever) to a maximum of 12 years (in Boortmeerbeek).
8 Research conducted by ING Belgium shows that, within two decades, one in two jobs in Belgium could be replaced by computers or robots.
9 The Flemish crisis teams for young people are overwhelmed by work, which resulted in 500 young people not being helped last year.
10 The green farm-subsidies farmers receive when they undertake environment-friendly efforts only cause minor environmental benefits due to the low standards employed.
11 The use of the NIPT-test, a test that can say whether the child has Down syndrome early during pregnancy, is on the rise, although the test is still very expensive.
12 In case the government wants to levy taxes on income, tax experts recommend them to focus on returns from Tak-21 and Tak-23 insurances.
13 Despite president Netanyahu's invitation to European Jews to migrate to Israel, few Belgian Jews are leaving the country.
14 Fewer containers are controlled in the port of Antwerp, since the cargo scanner is broken. As a result, fewer violations are noticed.
15 More and more young people are suffering from obesity type 2, a disease that used to be called 'old age diabetes'.
16 Reports from the National Bank show that the Belgian housing market is in balance. Prices were too high for a long time, but due to the fall in interest rates, houses have now become more affordable.
17 Open VLD submitted a bill to make bullying outside work punishable.
18 The National Bank recommends Belgian banks to change their tariff policy in order to increase their profit margins.
19 In response to a conflict between Kris Peeters and Jan Jambon, Prime Minister Charles Michel asks his coalition partners to argue less with each other and to collectively implement the government agreement.
20 Assuralia insurance asked the government to lower the guaranteed return on the supplementary pension from 3.25% to 0.4%.
21 N-VA is the only party that fully supports the Uplace project. CD&V and Open VLD express doubts about its construction.
22 CD&V and the other government parties disagree about the indexation of rent prices.
23 More and more people are trying to obtain their high school diploma in second-rate education.

24 Employers and employees reached an agreement about the activation of occupational retirees. They try to pressure the government to accept this agreement.
25 A 16-year-old girl has been forced to stay in a psychiatric institution for adults.
26 The loan for a second home provides greater tax benefits compared to the first home.
27 For the first time since 2010, the number of repatriations of illegal citizens to their country of origin has gone down.
28 The problem of Belgian citizens fighting in Syria takes so much time for State Security to handle that other important intelligence tasks are pushed aside.
29 Municipalities will no longer be obliged to set up a local library from 2016 onwards.
30 Taxpayers who, due to the Cayman-tax, declare their income from a foreign construction, will not be subject to additional checks by the tax authorities.
31 One in three employers' personal and payroll administrations are losing money due to bad governance and increasingly complex social legislation.
32 The NATO advises Belgium to dispose of their frigates, but favors F-16's.
33 N-VA wants to cut social security spending further in order to solve the budget deficit.
34 Minister Koen Geens announced an ambitious plan to reform the justice department.
35 CD&V and MR strongly oppose a limitation of unemployment benefits in time.
36 Flemish citizens today eat more unhealthy and move less compared to 2008, despite the health objectives of the Flemish government.
37 Hans D'Hondt, the chairman of the Finance department, has filed a criminal complaint against BBI director Karel Anthonissen for slander.
38 Research from the University of Leuven shows that doubling the third class of kindergarten is beneficial for children of whom the teacher is not sure they can manage first class.
39 Coalition parties CD&V and Open VLD and the opposition parties strongly oppose statements made by N-VA chairman Bart De Wever about racism.
40 The Centre of Health Care Knowledge discourages heart screenings for young amateur athletes.
41 About 20,000 people joined a demonstration organized by 'Hart boven Hard' against the government's saving policy.
42 Due to a wrong estimation of the amount of money the federal government gives to the Flemish (regional) level, the Flemish budget control becomes more difficult than initially expected.
43 There is an internal conflict in the Antwerp SP.A: the board finds the attitude of chair Yasmine Kherbache unacceptable.
44 In Eurostation, a real estate subsidiary of the SNCB, CEO Herwig Persoons and about thirty employees have been fired.
45 Steve Stevaert committed suicide, probably because he was accused of rape, and would be brought to court.
46 A study shows that a green tax shift, with higher environmental taxes in return for lower payroll rates, would have positive effects on both the environment and employment rates.
47 State Secretary Elke Sleurs proposes a policy measure to reduce the threshold to report rape.
48 Coucke has to pay taxes for a new deal he made with Mylan.
49 One of the possible scenarios for protecting the coastal landscape against an increase of the (North) Sea level is to deliberately flood all municipalities west of Ostend.
50 Because of the extremely low interest rates, buyers hardly lend on a time period of more than 25 years, which is not always the best decision, experts argue.
51 Youth coach of KV Oostende fired because he forced young football players to wear a humiliating t-shirt.

52 The Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism and the Minorities Forum request that the police stops describing suspects or perpetrators as "gypsy" in the national database.

53 Artsen Zonder Grenzen (doctors without borders) will start a rescue operation for refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.

54 Theo Francken is willing to 'resettle' more refugees in Belgium, but only if a fair European agreement is reached with regard to the distribution of those refugees.

55 During rush hour, there is as much traffic on regional roads compared to highways. During off-peak hours, there is even more traffic on the former.

56 In the future, diamond dealers will pay taxes on 0.55 percent of their turnover, which is determined in the "carat tax".

57 The Flemish parliament voted a resolution against nuclear weapons.

58 The unions are not planning a new strike, at least for the time being.

59 Immigrants who settle first in Brussels and Wallonia and then move to Flanders, will be obliged to integrate up to five years after arrival.

60 The stock market is gaining popularity due to the low interest rates. The number of active broker accounts of individuals is increasing rapidly.

61 An IPSO study (KU Leuven) shows that the enthusiasm of Flemish citizens for giving more power to the Flemish region has fallen for the first time since the 1990s.

62 Due to the low interest, the government is earning a higher fee trough the bank tax compared to the citizens' saving their money on traditional saving accounts.

63 Partner violence is no longer included as a priority in the National Security Plan of the Police.

64 The RVA may again preform unexpected supervisions when fraud is suspected.

65 Education Experts think the STEM program (a growing number of schools offering more science and engineering courses in the first grade) was decided upon too fast and rashly.

66 A study of Ipso (KULeuven) shows that Bart De Wever's role in the success of his party diminishes, while the role of the party program is rising.

67 Many hospitals have to cope with a shortage of qualified nurses in their emergency rooms and intensive care units.

68 Liesbeth Homans has almost completed her action plan on poverty in Flanders and among other things, she aims to organize 1-euro meals in every Flemish city.

69 Traffic experts criticize the Antea study, which is the report on which the Flemish government based its decision about Uplace.

70 Open VLD opposes a general reassessment of the cadastral income.

71 Vandenbroucke and Corluy say that Belgium is one of the European countries with the largest number of workless households.

72 Mats Jansson, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Delhaize, is also the adviser of the Dutch Ahold, who are currently holding takeover talks.

73 Some people consider moving to the country where their money is stored, in order to escape the Belgian tax authorities.

74 Julien Brabants (of the pharmaceutical company GSK) has concerns about the high prices his sector is asking for their new drugs.

75 A new advice from the Council of State makes it almost impossible to reopen the nuclear power station Doel1 soon.

76 The environmental tax on a new diesel car is so low that you sometimes have to pay less taxes than for a gasoline-powered car.

77 A prosecutor in the Flemish city Mechelen has initiated a criminal case against Skype, because the company refused to allow investigators to follow a conversation between criminals.

78 Test-Aankoop (consumer organization) is suing NMBS because of the damage caused during the strikes.
79 An internal benchmark study shows that NMBS is more than 8% less efficient compared to its European counterparts.
80 Two Eurostation executives are fired because of a particularly critical audit.
81 The chickenpox infection appears to be less innocent than initially expected. It drastically increases the risk of a stroke and causes many affected children to end up in hospitals.
82 More than half of the students enrolled in teacher training quits their education during mid-term without obtaining a diploma.
83 Rudi Vervoort compares the deprivation of Belgian nationality as a punishment for acts of terrorism, with the deprivation of German nationality under the Nazi regime.
84 The CGSP threatens to strike at the SNCB Group if the social negotiations do not resume quickly.
85 According to the Ipsos Barometer, less citizens have the intention to vote for the PS, both in Wallonia and Brussels.
86 The previous government declared that the third fiscal amnesty would be the last one. However, tax authorities today seem to regulate cases of fraud on a case-by-case basis.
87 Belgium is currently investigated by the European Commission because of the tax relief the government grants to certain multinationals.
88 The OECD encourages Belgium to exploit green taxation in order to improve the well-being of the citizens.
89 Real estate prices are expected to drop in 2015 and 2016, as a result of the reform of the housing bonus.
90 The Belgian government has lost 400 million euro due to tax evasion that took place following the opening of 3000 Belgian accounts at the bank HSBC.
91 In Belgium, more than half of the money laundering files is classified due to a lack of resources for further investigation.
92 The budgetary control unions will not organize a strike, but instead a rally of union activists.
93 Due to the shortage of tax staff, there are fewer and fewer in-depth tax audits for companies.
94 In 2013, all Belgian political parties received 73 million euros, paid for with public money.
95 Since 2012, SNCB experiences a stagnation in the number of users.
96 Municipalities are facing financial problems because of the new European accounting rules. They are unsuited for the realities of local authorities.
97 The open VLD wants to reduce the amount of anonymous sperm donors, as they believe every child should have the right to know its parents.
98 Alexander De Croo launched an indictment against the Kabila regime, denouncing the status quo of the last few years in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
99 The Belgian banks remain fragile. They are worried about the National Bank of Belgium.
100 Serge Kubla is placed under arrest for corruption.
101 The problems with the nuclear reactor at Doel and Tihange are more severe than initially expected.
102 The Council of Ministers is going to approve the index (taxation) jump.
103 The number of employees working in the Belgian construction sector has quadrupled since 2007.
104 The index (taxation) jump on wages will be extended to renting prices.
105 A draft bill is made to reassure a reduction in the guaranteed return of group insurances.
106 Half of the people between the age of 12 and 35 are at risk of deafness.
107 Tensions are rising between the SP and the MR, causing conflicts between governmental levels.
108 Reforming the justice department will cost more than initially expected.

109 The socialist union rejects the government's decision on early retirement.
110 For the last five months, the federal government has fully occupied the political agenda, thereby pushing regional entities aside.
111 The unions are taking action because they oppose the budgetary reforms proposed by the current government.
112 The Constitutional Court has to decide about the attendance of non-compulsory conviction courts.
113 Social fraud is omnipresent in hotels, restaurants and bars.
114 Two executives of Duferco are arrested.
115 The Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company increasingly has to cope with problems of radicalization.
116 Minister Geens wants to bring to court as many crimes as possible.
117 Train users do not like the new SNCB plan that came into force in December.
118 Dupriez and Khattabi are the new co-chairs of the green party Ecolo.
119 Taxi drivers are protesting against Uber.
120 Bart De Wever's remarks about immigration and the Berber community divide the nation.
121 The price of diesel must be doubled in order to reduce the risk of developing lung cancer.
122 Young athletes will not be subjected to mandatory cardiac tests.
123 'Hart boven hard' brings together more than 17,000 demonstrators, to protest against the government's saving policy.
124 The Supreme Council of Finance has lowered the amount of money that flows from the federal level to the regional entities, a decision that was based on evaluations of current money flows.
125 The federal government and the regions no longer agree.
126 Steve Stevaert, a Flemish politicians, has died.
127 Wallonia and Brussels are lacking behind in the protection of sensitive habitats and species.
128 Paying in the supermarket with your phone becomes more common.
129 The Socialists want the age of consent at the age of 14 instead of 16.
130 Bpost wants to ensure deliveries in the city center in order to relieve cities from traffic jams.
131 The mild weather has prevented the shedding.
132 There are 460,000 unemployed jobseekers, but only 83,000 job vacancies.
133 Poor people are often wrongly advised to turn to special education.
134 Walloon and Brussels citizens are increasingly being employed in Flanders.
135 The fee paid by the Charleroi airport to the Walloon Region is considered too low.
136 Bart De Wever is in conflict with the unions.
137 Base is bought by Telenet.
138 The draft bill on the "Cayman tax" is finished.
139 Medical specialists who are still in training denounce the precariousness of their social status.
140 André-Joseph Léonard is sentenced for failing to deal with acts of pedophilia. He has to pay a fine.
141 General practitioners demand the cancellation of the compulsory third-party payment.
142 Daniel Bacquelaine is in favor of the idea of part-time pension.
143 Governments cannot convince citizens anymore.
144 The MR instead of the PS is leading the polls in Wallonia.
145 The idea of replacing religion courses in secondary schools causes many disputes.
146 The reinstatement of unannounced residential checks irritates citizens.
147 The prolongation of nuclear power plants is heavily debated upon.
148 The Belgian integration policy has received a positive evaluation.

149 The federal police is interested in the accounts of Mons 2015.

150 The diamond sector has benefited from a special tax regime since 2000.

151 Citizens increasingly identify themselves with Belgium, rather than the regional entities Flanders or Wallonia.

152 Prospects made by the Federal Planning Bureau are positive about future employment rates.

153 Hervé Jamar assures the citizens that he will not raise additional taxes.

154 Belgians do not eat healthy.

155 Teachers will in the future be able to teach on several levels.

156 Film producers are awaiting rulings from the Finance ministry about tax shelter.

157 Marghem ignores the advice of the Council of State.

158 The new nationality code makes it more complicated for newcomers to obtain the Belgian nationality.

159 Citizens want to collectively sue the SNCB.

160 The Belgian sky is paralyzed.

161 SNCB tariffs will increase.

162 The N-VA wants to include social security in the tax shift.

163 The boss of the Federal Nuclear Control Agency is involved in a corruption scandal.

164 The results of the final controls by the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain will soon be made public.

CANADA

165 Seventeen Abbotsford, B.C., police officers are facing misconduct investigations for their handling of informants.

166 Elections Ontario finds evidence of Election Act contravention in Sudbury by-election bribery case.

167 Ahead of committee review, Conservatives reject calls for more independent oversight of national security agencies.

168 B.C. civil forfeiture office alleged to have moved to seize woman`s house without waiting for verdict.

169 Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz signals that no rate cut will take place in near future.

170 Canadian-Ukrainians are pressing Ottawa to aid their homeland while privately raising funds, providing supplies to troops, and even fighting on the front lines.

171 Six Quebec youths leave Canada to join ISIS/ISIL.

172 Ex-SCC judge Major says security and intelligence overseer is necessary to prevent Air-India repeats and improve inter-agency communication.

173 PEI Premier McLauchlin looks to strengthen conflict-of-interest rules following G&M investigation into officials' conduct and amid calls for judicial inquiry.

174 Alberta premier warns that massive changes are coming to Alberta's finances in light of oil price decline.

175 Federal Conservatives plan to table changes to the Criminal Code, making life imprisonment without parole an option in sentencing.

176 Defence Minister Rob Nicholson announces that Canada's mission in Iraq could be long term.

177 A train carrying crude oil near Gogama Ontario derailed, calling safety standards passed after the Lac Megantic disaster into question.

178 Ontario is crafting a plan to privatize - partially or fully - Hydro One, its energy utility.

179 Private sector economists submit their economic forecasts to Ottawa and argue that there is no need to further delay the tabling of the federal government's budget.

180 The CRTC announces it will relax Canadian content quotas and make other regulatory changes in a bid to improve the quality of Canadian-produced media products.

181 Toronto District School Board superintendents are planning to challenge wage clawbacks resulting from the three-year old public sector wage freeze.

182 A leaked internal presentation by the NSA reveals the US intelligence agency is conducting surveillance on Rogers, RBC, among others.

183 The Charbonneau Commission failed to investigate allegations of illicit political donations to former premier Pauline Marois' husband, Radio-Canada documents allege.

184 The Prime Minister will ask Parliament to expand and extend Canada's involvement in fighting ISIS/ISIL in Iraq.

185 CRTC orders television providers to offer consumers a pick-and-pay basic cable package by 2016.

186 FRONTIER, a stroke medication, will begin being administered by emergency medical services in a controlled drug trial in the Peel region, Toronto, and Vancouver.

187 The Prime Minister asked Parliament to expand Canada's involvement in fighting ISIS/ISIL to Syria; both the NDP and Liberals are refusing to support the motion.

188 Ottawa delays announcing whether or not it will join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a Beijin-led infrastructure bank that a number of Western countries have signed up for.

189 Alberta announces 2015 budget, which will includes a variety of tax increases and a record $5-billion deficit.

190 Air Canada flight A320 crash-lands in Halifax after landing short of the runway; only one of 138 on board sustained serious injury.

191 MPs vote - by a margin of 142 to 129 - to authorize expansion of Canada's anti-ISIS/ISL campaign into Syria.

192 RCMP prepares to release another report on Canada's missing and murdered Aboriginal women as Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt comes under fire for comments stating majority of Aboriginal women murdered by indigenous men.

193 Defense Minister reveals that the cost of extending Canada's mission in Iraq and Syria will bring the total price tag to $528 million.

194 Ontario plans to bring in a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse emissions which could raise $1-2 billion annually for green programs.

195 Alberta Premier Jim Prentice calls snap election in the midst of stagnating oil prices and economic turmoil.

196 The federal government sells its remaining share in General Motors, providing a pre-budget boost to Ottawa's finances.

197 Mike Duffy pleads not guilty in Senate expenses scandal, targets the PMO and Nigel Wright in his defense

198 Royal Dutch Shell acquires BC Group PLC, signaling consolidation to begin in British Columbia's liquefied natural gas industry.

199 Bell Media President Kevin Crull fired after intervening in CTV's news coverage of CRTC ruling.

200 Government figures show use of solitary confinement rising, despite Correctional Service Canada alterations to segregation policy.

201 Edmonton police will set up a counterterrorism unit to investigate increasing number of terror suspects and threats.

202 Supreme Court rules mandatory minimums for weapons possession unconstitutional.

203 Veterans Affairs announces new hiring spree amid release of departmental reports dating back to 2009 showing repeated warnings over lack of staff, funding.

204 CBC severs ties with two executives implicated in the Jian Gomeshi scandal after release of report by a third-party investigator into workplace harassment.

205 Majority control of Cirque du Soleil sold to U.S., Chinese buyers.

206 Department of National Defense says it will not make public a U.S. special forces report into the death of Canadian soldier Andrew Doiron who was killed in a friendly fire incident in Iraq.

207 Federal government delivers balanced budget.

208 Federation of Canadian Municipalities will begin negotiations with federal officials to finalize details of a new Federal Government transit funding program.

209 Employment Insurance claim numbers are rising, led by joblessness in Alberta and Newfoundland due to low oil prices

210 Federal Government announces less ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets than US ahead of UN summit on climate change.

211 Thalidomide Victims Association gives federal government two-week deadline to provide clear answers on promised lifetime aid package.

212 Canada will train and supply Jordanian troops as part of a two-year commitment to assist in the fight against Islamic State.

213 Correctional Services Canada report reveals that newly admitted federal inmates often wait upwards of 30 days for prescription medications.

214 Report urges cultural shift, creation of an independent complaints agency, in order to stop sexual misconduct in Canada's military.

215 General Tom Lawson, during a tour of Kuwait and Iraq with the Prime Minister, says that a series of probes have found Canadian soldiers not at fault for death of soldier Andrew Dorion.

216 Liberal party reveals new tax plan; includes tax-cuts and child benefits for middle-class, tax hike for wealthiest Canadians description.

217 PMO admits security breach over PMO-produced videos of Prime Minister visiting troops in Kuwait, Iraq which revealed service members' faces.

218 Alberta elects an NDP government after 44 years of Progressive Conservative rule.

219 Omar Khadr released on bail as Edmonton court rejects federal government's argument to keep him in prison.

220 Broadcast consortium's control over televised election campaign debates being challenged by new proposals from other media companies.

221 Liberal senators plan to vote against Bill C-51 despite Liberal MPs' support of the Bill.

222 Pacific Northwest LNG consortium plans response addressing environmental issues after Lax Kw'alaams First Nation rejects $1 billion cash offer.

223 Clause in budget bill which shields RCMP from criminal charges over destruction of documents related to the long-gun registry criticized by Information Commissioner.

224 Federal government scientists push to include the right to speak openly about their work in new collective agreements being negotiated.

225 Hundreds of volunteers spend long weekend searching for remains of Teresa Robinson, a First Nations girl who went missing May 11th and whose death is being investigated as a homicide.

226 Foreign Affairs fails to produce human rights assessments of Saudi Arabia for past two years, despite issuing export permits for arms sales.

227 RCMP catch-and-release counterterrorism campaign may have prevented 10 aspiring jihadists from heading off to war.

228 Shares of Ottawa-based Shopify e-commerce platform jump more than 50 percent in first day of trading, valuing firm at $1.9 Billion (US).

229 NDP and Liberal party critics say that federal government should be working with provinces on integration of mental-health services.

230 Jason Kenney calls the loss of the Iraqi city of Ramadi to ISIS forces "a wake-up call", questions Iraqi military's commitment to mission.

231 Tories propose voluntary CPP expansion in an about face that critics say is aimed at wooing voters months before a federal election.

232 Supreme Court Chief Justice uses 'cultural genocide' to describe Canada's residential schools policy in a speech at the Global Centre for Pluralism.

233 Justice Minister Peter McKay announces exit from federal politics, will stay on as Minister until fall election.

234 Federal government's 'life means life' bill put on hold as time winds down on parliamentary session.

235 Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools releases report which includes 94 recommendations including the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

236 Government plans to expand collection of biometric information on foreigners seeking to enter the country.

237 Auditor General report reveals 21 Senators, including Senate Speaker and leaders of the Government and Opposition, will be asked to reimburse cash.

238 Prime Minister Harper uses appearance at G7 summit to call on EU leaders to ratify Canada-EU trade deal

239 Canada commits to G7 plan to end fossil fuel use by the end of the century.

240 CBC fires long-time political host Evan Solomon over allegations he used his journalistic contacts to broker art deals.

241 With Pierre-Karl Péladeau as chair, the PQ leads the PLQ in voting intentions.

242 Taxpayers who failed to report assets abroad are twice as likely to be out of the picture compared to last year due to a new Harper government measure.

243 There are many cases of depression and burnout at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, according to a former inspector.

244 A forensic doctor summons the government to make accessible to all doctors the Dossier santé Québec following the suicide of Louise Légaré last year.

245 Prime Minister Philippe Couillard is preparing a cabinet reshuffle, largely in order to entrust Yves Bolduc, Education Officer, with a position where he is less likely to raise the controversy.

246 Six young Quebecers have left Canada to join jihadist groups in Syria.

247 Saint-Joseph-de-Sorel ranks last among Quebec municipalities for its air quality.

248 Since 2004, Canada has expelled five US nationals suspected of espionage. In fact, the largest number of foreign spies expelled by Canada were Americans.

249 Montreal plans to ban plastic bags.

250 A dozen attacks against postmen, during which their keys were stolen, have taken place around Montreal in recent months.

251 Gildan, a Montreal textile company and the main private employer in Honduras, is criticized for its working conditions.

252 In an interview with La Presse, Pauline Marois criticizes the current state of education in Quebec.

253 Quebec is cutting the salaries of pharmacists; those working in hospitals are awaiting a 15 to 45% decline

254 The Unions maintain that the government does not take into account the considerable savings achieved through retirements.

255 Bertrand Charest, a former junior national ski coach, has been charged with more than 47 complaints of sexual contact and sexual assault against eight former female skiers.

256 Host Joël Legendre suspends her professional activities for an indefinite period of time after the publication of a report on her arrest for public masturbation in Montreal last fall.

257 Over the past five years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of Montreal citizens who have been hospitalized against their will after being found to be dangerous to themselves or to others.

258 The Ministry of Education intends to impose new language requirements on baccalaureate courses

259 Three major trade union organizations - the CSQ, FTQ and CSN - announce that they do not support a "social strike" advocated by student associations.

260 Quebec defendants are nine times more likely than Ontarians to be found not criminally responsible for mental disorders, according to a study by the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.

261 Pierre Karl Peladeau blamed immigrants for the failure of the Independentist project and issued an apology.

262 A group of professors at UQAM published a letter to its university, calling for the end of intimidation and protests that have transpired in recent years.

263 According to the opposition, the districts of the Coderre administration received more pothole repairs than those who are represented by the opposition.

264 Québéc announced that it assumes a little less than 50% of the bill for the installation of sprinklers in residences for the elderly.

265 Montréal is launching a broad consultation to review its waste management plan, which could include the expansion of organic waste collection.

266 The Air Canada flight made a forced landing in Halifax before it even reached the runway; Only one of the 138 passengers needed an extended stay in the hospital.

267 The families of the victims of the Lac-Mégantic railway disaster will receive a compensation of $ 70 million.

268 The two sons of Canada's Consul General in Miami, Roxanne Dubé, were involved in a shootout resulting from a drug deal that went wrong. His 17-year-old son died while his 15-year-old brother was arrested.

269 The SPVM remains silent about a protester wounded by the police during the anti-austerity demonstration on April 2 when the entire scene was photographed.

270 Mike Duffy pleads not guilty to the Senate's illegal expenditure scandal; His defense plans to involve the Prime Minister and Nigel Wright.

271 The RCMP is launching an online fight on social media to counter the Islamic state, al-Qaeda and other Islamist threats.

272 The student protest at UQAM resulted in 22 arrests.

273 Canada formally advised the UN Security Council of its intention to begin its bombing campaign in Syria against the Islamic state.

274 At least 48 soldiers who returned from a deployment in Afghanistan committed suicide on their return, according to figures from the Ministry of Defense.

275 The executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change calls on Ottawa and the provinces to work together to tackle climate change.

276 The Supreme Court struck down the minimum penalties for possession of prohibited weapons.

277 Canada will send about 200 soldiers to Ukraine to help train the Ukrainian armed forces.

278 Marc Garneau demands action by the federal government on the release of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi.

279 A proposed Hydro-Québec transmission line linking Lac-Saint-Jean to the east of the island of Montréal is already a source of discord.

280 Two young CEGEPs, El Mahdi Jamali and Sabrine Djermane, are formally charged with terrorism-related activities, including possession of explosive substances.

281 The federal government has a balanced budget.

282 Canada will invest $ 243 million to support its participation in the 30-meter telescope project in Hawaii.

283 Canadian border guards stripped of 48 US students in 2011: the event violated current government policies and may even have violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

284 L'Académie hassidique Beth Esther d'Outremont lost its license to operate in 2012 and was deemed not religious enough by the Administrative Tribunal of Quebec to benefit from an exemption of property taxes.

285 Investigation of the adoption agency, Alliance des Familles du Québec, which operated mainly in the countries of the former Soviet bloc; All the activities of the agency are suspended until the conclusion of the investigation.

286 The Quebec Infertile Couples Association warns that if Quebec abandons assisted human reproduction programs, Quebecers will turn to clinics in the United States.

287 Quebec citizens are trapped in Nepal after the earthquake; Their families criticize Canada's failure to repatriate them.

288 A damaging report on sexual misconduct in the Canadian military calls for a culture change and the creation of an independent complaint center.

289 An investigation of 'La Presse' reveals that the military police deployed in Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011 is responsible for creating a "climate of terror" and the bad treatment of Afghan prisoners.

290 Health Canada is renewing marijuana production licenses for two persons awaiting trial and under conditions prohibiting their production.

291 Canada is cut in half, reveals a new study by Statistics Canada: on the one hand, the northern provinces and territories, where the level of crime reported by the police is very high; On the other, the south of the provinces, much more…

292 The NDP ended the long 44-year reign of the Progressive Conservative Party by winning the general election in Alberta.

293 Omar Khadr was released on bail when a court in Edmonton rejected the federal government's arguments.

294 The Chief Electoral Officer of Quebec (DGEQ) was forced to drop charges in a municipal electoral misconduct case after one of his investigators modified some of the evidence.

295 Pierre Céré, candidate to become chief of the PQ, retreats: only three candidates left.

296 SPVM large-scale survey on alcohol smuggling is slowed down by the federal government

297 Bombardier removes a thousand jobs in Montreal.

298 The budget bill, which protects the RCMP from criminal charges related to the destruction of long gun registration documents, is criticized by the Information Commissioner.

299 Pierre Karl Péladeau won the Parti Québécois leadership race in the first round of voting.

300 A CPE educator in Verdun was charged with sexual contact on a 4-year-old.

301 Ten youngsters, suspected of jihadism, were arrested at the Montreal airport by the RCMP.

302 In the face of a tourism deficit in Quebec, the industry is demanding investment in marketing campaigns

303 The situation in emergency hospitals does not improve in Quebec, reveals the list of emergencies 2014-2015 of La Presse.

304 Premiums for senior public servants cannot be considered "automatic pay", and they must now be linked to measurable results, says prime minister Philippe Couillard.

305 Death by overdose is the tenth most common cause of death this year in Montreal.

306 The RCMP discloses the full version of the video by Zehaf Bibeau.

307 Superior Court judge Brian Riordan sentenced tobacco companies to pay $ 15 billion in punitive and moral damages to Quebec smokers and ex-smokers.

308 Jacques Parizeau dies at the age of 84.

309 A plan for a new hockey arena for the Gatineau Olympiques was rejected by City Council.

310 Boisvenu, targeted by an RCMP investigation, has left the Conservative caucus and will now sit as an independent.

311 The supreme court of Saudi Arabia confirmed the condemnation of the blogger Raif Badawi, to whom the Saudi justice imposes 10 years of prison and 1000 lashes.

312 The Government of Quebec launches a public consultation at the Public Environmental Hearing Office on the Quebec portion of the TransCanada East Power Pipeline Project.

313 Gilles Duceppe takes over the leadership of the Bloc Québécois.

314 The Ontario Court of Appeal granted patients the right to sue for 2011, 2012 privacy breaches.

315 Liberals found in 'apparent contravention' of bribery laws in Subdbury by-election, according to Elections Ontario chief.

316 Al Shabab, an East African Al Qaeda affiliate, calls for attacks on the West Edmonton mall.

317 A mysterious tunnel was discovered near York University, close by the construction site for the 2015 Pan Am games.

318 The federal Conservatives sought to limit expert testimony on new terror legislation, Bill C-51, to four days, urging MPs to pass the bill 'as quickly as possible'.

319 Federal Conservatives are considering more televised debates in the upcoming election in a bid to trip up Liberal leader Justin Trudeau.

320 Six Québec teenagers leave Canada to join ISIS/ISIL.

321 A year-old warning from the RCMP regarding the danger posed by drones has gone unheeded by the federal government.

322 Licensing distortions by the Wine Rack and Wine Store are being probed by a government-appointed panel, headed by former TD Bank CEO Ed Clark, and may face major reorganizations.

323 Provincial panel calls for urgent changes to the Quality of Care Information Protection Act to close security loopholes.

324 Ontario's former Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, criticized the province's lack of action on patient privacy breaches.

325 Hair tests halted at controversial Motherisk lab at Sick Kids after questions were raised over the quality of their analyses.

326 After soldier Andrew Dorion was killed in a friendly-fire incident in Iraq, the version of the event supplied by Kurdish forces was challenged by Canada's military.

327 RCMP alleges that Pamela Wallin committed fraud and breach of trust by billing the Senate for travel expenses related to work on corporate boards.

328 A number of critics and a U.S. government study call into question the adequacy of the federal government's rail disaster plan.

329 Ontario government plans on allowing the sale of beer and wine in grocery stores and assigning a franchise fee to the Beer Store.

330 Three OPP officers, all high-ranking members of the police union, were suspended amid an RCMP investigation into alleged fraud.

331 The publication of the Sunshine List revealed the high salaries of Toronto police officers, with one constable making $244,000, largely due to paid duty overtime work.

332 Federal Conservative backbencher Larry Miller retracks controversial remarks on the wearing of the niqab during citizenship ceremonies.

333 Jury in trial of two men accused in Via rail bombing plot reaches unanimous verdict on one of the accused, but are at an impasse regarding the second man; deliberations drag on.

334 CRTC rules that cable TV providers will have to offer a $25 basic service, as well as provide pick-and-pay offerings.

335 The cost of providing medical marijuana to injured veterans has increased by more than 10 times this year over last.

336 Former citizenship director general raises alarms over a sharp drop in the percentage of immigrants becoming citizens, blames new rules and fees.

337 Privacy Commissioner calls for prosecution of two health professionals who allegedly accessed Rob Ford's medical records.

338 Bell media CEO criticized by CRTC Chair and later fired for ordering a blackout of the Chair's comments on Bell-owned-CTV news.

339 Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services employees told that recouping the $242 million in overpayments due to software errors is 'not a critical priority'.

340 The case against a North Bay nurse accused of snooping into nearly 6,000 private medical records was dropped due to excessive Crown delays.

341 Health Canada issues clearer warnings about ADHD medications after reviewing reports of potential side-effects including suicidal thoughts and attempts.

342 Tory Senator Nancy Ruth tells reporters that she claimed expenses for breakfast because of 'awful' food served on planes.

343 Ontario plans to address high cost of hospital parking fees after hospital consultations conclude.

344 The federal government plans to double the contribution limit on Tax Free Savings Accounts.

345 The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers is in talks with the Government of Ontario in an attempt to get a share of alcohol sales licenses for small grocers.

346 RCMP forced to reassign hundreds of staff as costs of fighting terror soar with no increases in funding from federal government.

347 Province urged by People for Education to get rid of 'streaming' in high schools, ending use of applied classes in Grade 9.

348 Ontario to join Québec in establishing a provincial cap and trade system to price carbon emissions.

349 Supreme Court of Canada strikes down mandatory minimums for gun crimes.

350 Ontario to sell off 60% of its stake in Hydro One but will retain regulatory, price control.

351 Durham teachers go on strike in possible signal of oncoming labour unrest in education after Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation ends talks at the provincial level.

352 Toronto gets first ever black police chief in Mark Saunders as calls for end to controversial practice of carding increase.

353 Ontario Attorney General will seek clarification in court regarding a November 2014 ruling which allowed an 11-year old aboriginal girl to be taken off chemotherapy.

354 Ontario delivers budget - plan includes $130-billion in infrastructure spending fueled by reduced spending, Hydro One sale, and supermarket beer sales.

355 Sudbury-area high school teachers go on strike as more walkouts are expected.

356 Fate of former frontrunner for the PC leadership Christine Elliot now uncertain as convention nears

357 Ontario Liberals criticized for spending nearly $7-million on fees for consultants related to reports on supermarket beer sales and Hydro One privatization.

358 Ontario Auditor General report criticizes government contracting process for snow removal which may have put lives in jeopardy.

359 Community and Social Services Minister apologizes, admits improper training of staff in use of Social Assistance Management System software.

360 High school teachers' strikes spread to Peel Region, the third region targeted in as many weeks for strategic strikes as labor dispute continues.

361 35,000 children kept out of school by parents upset over new sex-education curriculum.

362 Education Minister accuses elementary teachers of being determined to strike no matter what they were offered.

363 Federal panel OKs nuclear waste disposal site below Bruce nuclear station near Kincardine.

364 Information and Privacy Commissioner finds that LCBO is not required to release data on discounted liquor sales to embassies and consulates.

365 Study reveals black youth face racism and feelings of alienation in Peel, where they are a growing segment of the population.

366 College of Nurses of Ontario reveals that it does not automatically alert police when it becomes aware of privacy violations by its members.

367 Auditor General of Ontario and Liberals clash over government plans to change Government Advertising Act.

368 Two men who yelled vulgar phrase at CityNews reporter barred from attending future events at MLSE facilities.

369 Bombardier to slash 1,750 positions including 500 at its plant in Toronto.

370 CGI industries sues eHealth Ontario for $102 million over cancelled diabetes registry contract.

371 Ontario Court of Appeal orders new preliminary inquiry for man accused of drug charges due to a number of language rights violations in his hearing.

372 Premier Wynne makes trip to Washington, D.C to meet with American officials and deliver speech promoting cap-and-trade emissions plan.

373 Labour ministry annual enforcement blitz targets abusive employers, aims to prevent business from taking advantage of workers.

374 Ontario Federation of Labour has been assigned a financial administrator to oversee its affairs in light of millions of dollars in due losses.

375 Every year thousands of permanent residents who travel outside Canada are being denied re-entry and face losing their status because of an invalid PR card.

376 Ontario ombudsman says thousands of Hydro One customers were trapped in a billing nightmare because the company chose to lie about how serious the problem was.

377 High school teachers strike declared illegal by Ontario Labour Relations Board, ordering teachers in the four striking regions back to work immediately.

378 Foreign military personnel receive steep discounts on alcohol purchases at LCBO.

379 Ontario Supreme Court strikes down provincial motion to block lawsuit from former Crown Wards who suffered years of abuse.

380 Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation says that disputes over class size caps are a major stumbling block in ongoing labour dispute.

381 College of Physicians and Surgeons will now let patients know when it has 'orally cautioned' its doctors

382 Changes to Highways and Traffic Act include stiffer penalties for distracted driving, among other amendments.

383 Proposed bill would stop police from sharing information from background checks without first showing to the person involved.

384 Court of Appeal declines to overturn conviction of brothers despite revelation that juror searched for case online while trial was underway.

385 Legal Aid Ontario embarks on massive expansion in bid to improve services offered to lowest-income Ontarians.

386 Teachers warn parents that students will likely not receive full report cards this year, instead get letter stating pass/fail.

387 Ontario to be first jurisdiction in North America to curb use of pesticides harmful to bees and other pollinators.

ISRAEL

388 Arguments between Iran and the West over Iran's nuclear program.

389 Former prime minister Olmert is accused of fraud (Talanski case).

390 The deadline for the discussions between Iran and the West regarding the nuclear program was extended.

391 Iran and the West reached agreement on a detailed nuclear outline.

392 The Israeli cabinet is unanimously against the nuclear agreement with Iran.

393 Israel will promote legislation in Congress that will make it difficult to approve the nuclear agreement with Iran.

394 Obama: When the agreement with Iran ends, the latter will be able to rich a bomb quickly.

395 Chief Military Advocate General: "I will never declare that the IDF is the most moral army in the world.

396 Prime minister Netanyahu: the danger is that Iran will follow the agreement.

397 The Jewish home party demands veto on religion and state issues.

398 Russia cancelled the prohibition to sell Iran S-300 rockets.

399 The supreme court of Israel ruled that one can claim compensations from those who call to boycott Israel.

400 The Likud party (the incumbent party) will not able a free voting by other parties regarding bills that weaken the supreme court.

401 President Riblin gives speech during Israeli memorial day regarding Israel's unity.

402 Three terror attacks during one day in Jerusalem and Hebron.

403 The tension at the northern border is rising: IDF prevented a bomb explosion.

404 United States: It will be hard for us to support Israel without the latter's obligation for two-state solution.

405 Mohammed Deif, the chief commander of the military wing of Hamas, is alive.

406 The first coalition agreements have reached: the status of the Supreme Court of Israel will not be harmed, but the media's status may be harmed.

407 Kahlon (future Minister of Finance): We inspect tax on housing purchase.

408 A protest of Ethiopian jews ends with 50 injured.

409 Liberman (foreign minister) resigns and decides to be in the opposition.

410 Naftali Bennett (party leader) gives an ultimatum and demands the justice ministry to his party.

411 Netanyahu announced on a new government.

412 Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein is expected to oppose the inclusion of coalition funds and settlement budgets in the Prime Minister's coalition agreements with the Jewish Home and Yehadut Hatora.

413 Senior members of Mahaneh Hatzioni (Zionist Camp) urge Labor leader Isaac Herzog not to join Netanyahu government.

414 Knesset approves the first reading of a bill initiated by Benjamin Netanyahu supporting an increase in the number of ministers allowed in the government.

415 Israel's 34th government will be sworn in this evening at the Knesset; Netanyhu is conducting ongoing conversations with senior Likud members about their government portfolios.

416 Obama: An Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement will not be possible in the year ahead.

417 Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev says she won't hesitate to use censorship to protect Israel's image.

418 As part of coalition deal, government removes condition of employment for ultraorthodox families receiving housing subsidies.

419 Israeli authorities initiate and then cancel plan to separate between Israelis and Palestinians on buses.

420 Right wing activist secretly builds strategically-placed settlement in West Bank.

421 Two young men stabbed in Jerusalem terrorist attacks.

422 Prime Minister Netanyahu discusses border issues in meeting with EU foreign minister.

423 A rocket fired from Gaza lands in Gan Yavneh.

424 Energy monopolies toughen stance against government and refuse to reduce prices.

425 Hezbollah makes changes in light of Syrian conflict and tensions with Lebanese rivals.

426 Government forms Ministerial Committee for Legislation, Netanyahu to wield absolute power.

427 IDF plans to ease punishments for soldiers caught using soft drugs.

428 IDF Deputy Chief of Staff says "Syrian military has effectively ceased to exist".

429 President Obama suggests US will not veto a UN resolution calling for an end to Israeli occupation.

430 IDF Chief of Staff plans to reduce authority of military rabbinate.

431 Moshe Kahlon increases pressure on Netanyahu and discusses the possibility of leaving the coalition.

432 Israel is attempting to stop Europe's decision to label products from the West Bank.

433 President Riviln warns against increasing divisions in Israeli society.

434 Former police major general Bruno Stein accused of receiving a bribe in Fisher case.

435 Naftali Bennett uses authority to cancel play; Miri Regev threatens Arab theater company.

436 Hague's International Criminal Court sending representatives to Israel to investigate human rights violations.

437 Marking one year since the murder of three Israeli teenagers in West Bank.

438 Israel asks the United States to assist Druze in Syria.

439 Despite recommendation of doctors, government approves force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike.

440 Government considers changing Sheshinski Law in favor of gas companies.

441 Miri Regev causes cancellation of Yigal Amir film and cuts funding for Arab theatre.

442 Fierce battles in Syria over the last enclave under Assad's control.

443 Defense Minister Ya'alon approves renovation of structure used as a strategic settlement in the West Bank.

444 Border policeman stabbed and injured in Jerusalem terror attack at Damascus Gate.

445 Alleged evidence of Israeli and Palestinian war crimes published in UN report on Operation Protective Edge.

446 Cabinet expected to approve the advancement of a compromise with gas companies.

447 Terrorists carry out two attacks in the West Bank: a shooting injures four civilians; a stabbing injures an IDF soldier.

448 Government publishes outline of compromise with gas companies.

449 ISIS commits terror attack in northern Sinai Peninsula; Israel claims Hamas is assisting Islamist militants.

450 Iran and global powers are approaching agreement on the Iranian nuclear program.

451 Assistant Commissioner Efraim Bracha commits suicide.

452 Iran makes new demands in negotiations with global powers over its nuclear program; the deadline for an agreement will likely be extended.

453 Senior military officials recommend to defense minister that Israel ease Gaza blockade.

454 Report shows sharp rise in demolitions of houses in Bedouin villages in the Negev.

455 Israel separate between negotiations on bodies on soldiers and the release of civilians held in Gaza.

456 Ruhani declares that Iran and global powers are approaching agreement on a nuclear deal.

457 Iran and global powers meet in Vienna to complete agreement on Iranian nuclear program.

458 Iran and global powers sign an agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

459 Reuven Rivlin is conducting negotiations with Benjamin Netanyahu and Isaac Herzog about the possibility of forming a unity government.

460 Netanyahu and Kerry conduct tense phone conversation; U.S. defense secretary visits Israel following Iran nuclear deal.

461 Isaac Herzog announces that Hamahane Hatzioni will not join the coalition government.

462 The Locker committee issues a report recommending extensive changes to the military.

463 White House officials say a decision by Congress to reject the Iran nuclear deal would endanger Israel.

464 Internal report of Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) determines that Susya village belongs to Palestinians.

465 The number of Palestinians imprisoned without trial has doubled since Operation Protective Edge.

466 Education Ministry plans to transfer responsibility for major projects to a private company.

467 US authorities have approved Jonathan Pollard's release next November.

468 Security forces demolished two houses in Bet El in accordance with a decision of the Supreme Court.

469 Jewish terrorists set a Palestinian home ablaze and kill an infant inside.

470 Israel Security Agency finds insufficient evidence to outlaw extremist right-wing group Lehava.

471 Israel Security Agency begins administrative arrests of right-wing extremists.

Figure 1.1 —Number of citizen ratings per news story
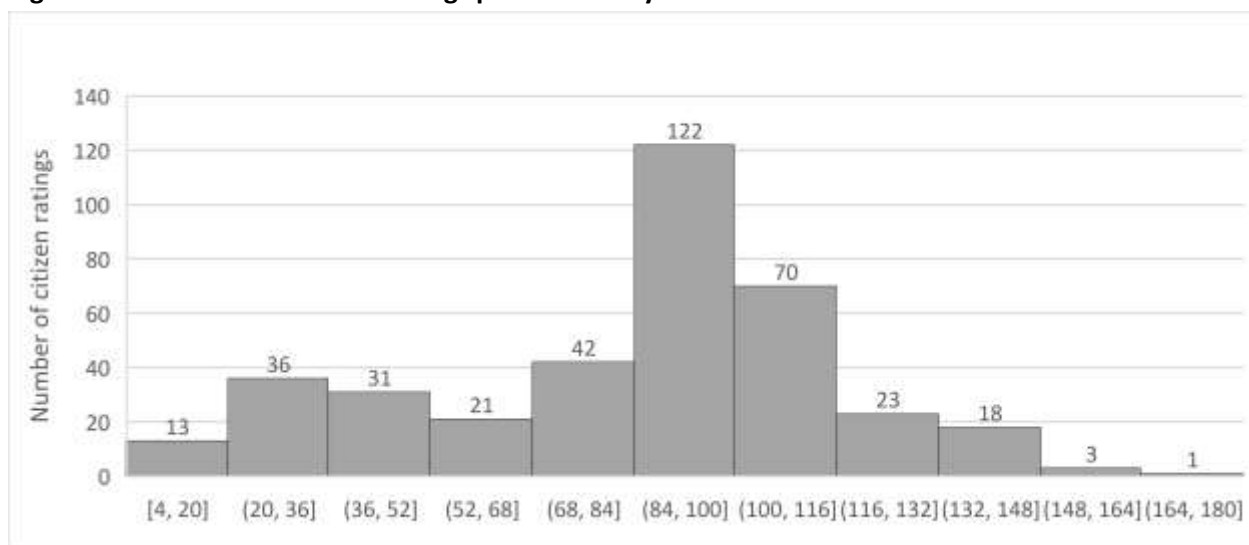
Table 2.1—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Citizens' average real priority of news story	1.07	(.11)	.000	.80	(.17)	.000	1.09	(.15)	.000	1.02	(.08)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	—			—			—			.02	(.20)	.919
Israel	—			—			—			.01	(.23)	.956
Constant	-.01	(.61)	.991	1.61	(1.03)	.120	-.08	(.92)	.930	.29	(.45)	.513
N	1,315			377			302			1,994			
Variance politician level	.441			.448			.833			.501			
Variance story level	.864			.744			.711			.837			
Variance residual	4.520			4.741			5.233			4.655			

Table 3.1—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Women's average real priority of news story	.09	(.16)	.544	.15	(.21)	.484	-.25	(.20)	.204	.02	(.11)	.852
Men's average real priority of news story	.99	(.16)	.000	.94	(.20)	.000	1.17	(.23)	.000	1.02	(.11)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	—			—			—			.11	.19	.563
Israel	—			—			—			.12	.22	.582
Constant	-.08	(.59)	.894	1.05	(.95)	.266	-.01	(.92)	.991	.16	.43	.714
N	1,315			376			302			1,993		
Variance politician level	.451			.420			.783			.504		
Variance story level	.776			.693			.355			.714		
Variance residual	4.517			4.743			5.299			4.66		

Table 3.2—Coefficients from models with one group (men *or* women) included at a time

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED[a]		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	P	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Women's average real priority of news story	.84	(.11)	.000	.82	(.16)	.000	.49	(.16)	.003	.75	(.08)	.000
Men's average real priority of news story	1.06	(.10)	.000	1.04	(.14)	.000	.95	(.16)	.000	1.03	(.07)	.000

[a] The coefficient for men differs significantly from that of women. The difference between the coefficients is .28, with a standard error of $\sqrt{(.07^2 + .08^2)} = .11$.

Note: model structure identical to that in Appendix Table 3.1; but this time with preferences of only one group included.

Table 3.3—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities (robustness tests)

	Only stories where men and women differ significantly from each other			Only stories for which the confidence interval around the estimate of the real public priority spans less than one point (on a scale from 0 to 10)		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Women's average real priority of news story	.06	(.14)	.649	.14	(.25)	.583
Men's average real priority of news story	1.19	(.13)	.000	1.11	(.24)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)						
Canada	.65	(.41)	.109	.40	(.30)	.174
Israel	.65	(.40)	.105	-.70	(.78)	.370
Constant	-1.25	(.80)	.118	-1.46	(.71)	.041
N	374			540		
Variance politician level	.887			.340		
Variance story level	.175			.545		
Variance residual	4.454			4.547		

Table 3.4—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities (interaction with gender of politician)

	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Women's average real priority of news story	-.03	(.13)	.840	.01	(.11)	.898
Men's average real priority of news story	1.02	(.11)	.000	.90	(.13)	.000
Male politician	-.55	(.63)	.385	-1.22	(.63)	.053
Male politician * Women's average real priority of news story	.06	(.11)	.587	—		
Male politician * Men's average real priority of news story	—			.18	(.11)	.102
Countries (ref.: Belgium)						
Canada	.13	(.19)	.503	.13	(.19)	.510
Israel	.14	(.22)	.530	.13	(.22)	.560
Constant	.53	(.61)	.390	.97	(.61)	.108
N	1,993			1,993		
Variance politician level	.495			.487		
Variance story level	.710			.710		
Variance residual	4.657			4.657		

Table 4.1—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Lower-educated's average real priority of news story	.35	(.18)	.051	.21	(.20)	.280	.08	(.24)	.739	.24	(.12)	.041
Higher-educated's average real priority of news story	.72	(.18)	.000	.82	(.20)	.000	.71	(.26)	.006	.76	(.12)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	—			—			—			.08	(.20)	.697
Israel	—			—			—			.06	(.23)	.787
Constant	-.04	(.60)	.949	.25	(.91)	.784	1.71	(1.03)	.096	.36	(.45)	.414
N	1,315			377			302			1,994			
Variance politician level	.445			.472			.828			.509			
Variance story level	.836			.765			.695			.827			
Variance residual	4.514			4.740			5.243			4.653			

Table 4.2—Coefficients from models with one group (lower-educated *or* higher-educated) included at a time

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED[a]		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	P	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Lower-educated's average real priority of news story	.96	(.11)	.000	.77	(.15)	.000	.58	(.16)	.000	.82	(.08)	.000
Higher-educated's average real priority of news story	1.01	(.10)	.000	.97	(.14)	.000	.77	(.16)	.000	.94	(.07)	.000

[a] The coefficient for the lower-educated does not differ significantly from that of the higher-educated. The difference between the coefficients is .12, with a standard error of $\sqrt{(.08^2 + .07^2)} = .11$.

Note: model structure identical to that in Appendix Table 4.1; but this time with preferences of only one group included.

Table 4.3—Multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities (robustness tests)

	Only stories where lower- and higher-educated differ significantly from each other			Only stories for which the confidence interval around the estimate of the real public priority spans less than one point (on a scale from 0 to 10)		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Lower educated's average real priority of news story	.00	(.23)	.984	-.07	(.28)	.803
Higher educated's average real priority of news story	.69	(.26)	.009	1.30	(.28)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)						
Canada	.37	(.58)	.526	.35	(.29)	.235
Israel	.59	(.66)	.372	-.58	(.79)	.464
Constant	1.80	(1.72)	.295	-1.48	(.71)	.037
N	226			540		
Variance politician level	—[a]			.343		
Variance story level	.851			.550		
Variance residual	6.516			4.538		

[a] The crossed-effects multilevel model that we employ for most analyses does not work here; the model is very complex and the N is substantially lower here. We therefore drop the random effect at the politician level, which should pose no problems to the validity of the results because variance at that level is limited anyway.

Table 5.1—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Average real priority of news story of citizens with low interest	.07	(.15)	.639	.18	(.14)	.201	.06	(.22)	.790	.12	(.09)	.200
Average real priority of news story of citizens with higher interest	1.00	(.15)	.000	.91	(.18)	.000	.74	(.22)	.001	.90	(.10)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)												
Canada	—			—			—			.05	(.20)	.785
Israel	—			—			—			.15	(.23)	.516
Constant	-.24	(.61)	.694	-.24	(.94)	.800	1.55	(1.03)	.135	.07	(.45)	.872
N	1,315			376			302			1,993			
Variance politician level	.438			.462			.819			.499			
Variance story level	.820			.744			.686			.805			
Variance residual	4.521			4.728			5.242			4.659			

Table 5.2—Coefficients from models with one group (low interest *or* higher interest) included at a time

	Belgium			Canada			Israel			COUNTRIES POOLED[a]		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	P	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Average real priority of news story of citizens with low interest	.77	(.11)	.000	.58	(.13)	.000	.54	(.17)	.002	.66	(.08)	.000
Average real priority of news story of citizens with higher interest	1.05	(.10)	.000	1.01	(.15)	.000	.78	(.16)	.000	.98	(.08)	.000

[a] The coefficient for the citizens with low interest differs significantly from that of the citizens with higher interest. The difference between the coefficients is .32, with a standard error of $\sqrt{(.08^2 + .08^2)} = .11$.

Note: model structure identical to that in Appendix Table 5.1; but this time with preferences of only one group included.

Table 5.3—Multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities (robustness tests)

	Only stories where lower- and higher-educated differ significantly from each other			Only stories for which the confidence interval around the estimate of the real public priority spans less than one point (on a scale from 0 to 10)		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Average real priority of news story of citizens with low interest	.10	(.19)	.587	.13	(.21)	.551
Average real priority of news story of citizens with higher interest	1.03	(.20)	.000	1.12	(.21)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)						
Canada	-.06	(.28)	.836	.30	(.30)	.309
Israel	.30	(.39)	.445	-.58	(.80)	.469
Constant	-.71	(.77)	.358	-1.70	(.74)	.021
N	950			540		
Variance politician level	.819			.340		
Variance story level	.956			.579		
Variance residual	4.357			4.547		

Table 6.1—Crossed-effects multilevel model explaining politicians' estimations of citizens' priorities

	Results from a model with all groups included simultaneously			Coefficients from eight *separate* models, each time including one group only		
	Coef.	(S.E.)	p	Coef.	(S.E.)	p
Average, real priority of news story of…						
… lower-educated women with low political interest	-.08	(.06)	.201	.26	(.06)	.000
… higher-educated women with low political interest	-.01	(.07)	.855	.39	(.06)	.000
… lower-educated women with higher political interest	-.05	(.08)	.506	.41	(.06)	.000
… higher-educated women with higher political interest	.26	(.10)	.012	.66	(.07)	.000
… lower-educated men with low political interest	.08	(.04)	.084	.26	(.05)	.000
… higher-educated men with low political interest	.08	(.05)	.071	.28	(.05)	.000
… lower-educated men with higher political interest	.22	(.09)	.015	.65	(.07)	.000
… higher-educated men with higher political interest	.55	(.10)	.000	.83	(.07)	.000
Countries (ref.: Belgium)						
Canada	.09	(.21)	.681			
Israel	.15	(.24)	.541			
Constant	-.10	(.47)	.832			
N	1,885					
Variance politician level	.500					
Variance story level (control model)	.723					
Variance residual	4.687					